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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[THE GIPSY PUSHED BACK THE RED HOOD, AND DISCLOSED THE GRIP, BLACK CURLY HAIR OF PHILIP ARNESON.]

BERYL'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE was trouble at The Towers. Lord Chesney was ill. The old man who had shown Beryl so much kindness, who was so fond and proud of his beautiful grandchild, was very near death, and his danger filled every heart around him with sadness.

It had come about so gradually that they were not prepared for it. Lord Chesney had been ailing at the beginning of August. The heat of the dog days tried him, and perhaps tempted him into imprudence.

He was too venturesome for his years, and caught a chill. To the chill succeeded a kind of feverish ague; and when at last this was conquered, and his attendants believed he had only to "get up his strength," the doctor's fiat went forth.

Lord Chesney's constitution was too enfeebled to rally from the strain. He would not suffer much, but he could never regain his strength. There would be some weeks of

lassitude and feebleness, and then the faint spark of life would go out.

"Can nothing be done?" asked Beryl, pleadingly. "Oh! Dr. Steele, can't you save him? He is almost all I have in the world!"

"I would save him gladly if it lay in my power, my dear young lady, for Lord Chesney and I are old friends. But he is past all human skill."

"If we took him abroad?"

"He has not strength to stand the journey. It would only hasten the end. Believe me, it would be happier for him to die at home."

The tears were still wet on her face when she went back to the sick-room. Lord Chesney saw them, and smiled faintly.

"You are a little sorry then, Beryl, at the thought of losing the old man?"

"A little sorry! Oh! grandfather, if you could only recover I would give years of my life!"

"Depend upon it, my dear, it is better as it is," said the peer, gently. "I have lived long enough to know and love you. I have been very happy with you to glid the evening of my life, dear child. But there are others

waiting for me in Paradise—my wife, and your own dear mother, Beryl, if she can ever forgive my harshness to her and her husband."

"She will know you have been all kindness to her child," whispered Beryl.

"And now dry your eyes," said Lord Chesney, in his old, peremptory manner, "and sit down close to me, for I want to talk to you. After what Steele said to me this morning it is time I set my house in order."

Beryl shuddered. There was no subject more painful to her than her own future.

"You are the last of our race," said her grandfather, gravely. "When you came home to me five years ago I knew that, though you might perhaps not inherit all I had to leave, the old name must descend to you. The moment the breath is out of my body, Beryl, you will be Lady Chesney."

"I thought the title would be extinct?"

"No. It has descended once before in the female line. My great-grandmother was Lady Chesney in her own right. Her husband took her name, as yours must do when you marry."

Beryl took courage.

"I shall never marry, grand-aga," she said, gravely. "If you would only believe me I have no wish to do so."

"When you came to me," returned Lord Chesney, "my pride would not suffer the world at large to know from how a humble home I took you, but every legal form was complied with. My lawyer holds ample proofs that you are the child of my daughter Beryl and her husband, and a deed was executed by which you took the name of Chesney."

Beryl bowed her head.
"I know. I was glad of it. I liked to think I began a new life with a new name."

"You are Beryl Chesney," said the old man, firmly. "One day not long hence you will be Lady Chesney. That is a certain fact, but whether you are Lady Chesney of The Towers rests only with yourself."

"It rests with you, grandpapa."

"Don't you care?" he asked, in displeased surprise. "Does it really matter nothing to you whether you are rich or poor?"

"I should like to have two hundred a-year of my own," said Beryl, dreamily, "so that whatever happened I might be provided for."

"And I suppose you would go out to Australia, and cast in your lot with your stepmother and her brood?"

"No, I shouldn't. Goody has promised me I may stay with her always."

"Marion is a very suitable companion for you. I have a great opinion of her common sense."

"And I have a great faith in her tender heart," said Beryl, gravely.

"Well, I mean to mark my sense of her worth by leaving her five hundred a-year; and it only rests with you, Beryl, for the old life to go on as usual at The Towers. I want you to be my heiress, but it is a splendid property, and will make you a prey for fortune-hunters. If I leave you The Towers is must be only on certain conditions."

"I would do my best," said Beryl, slowly; "but if one of the conditions is matrimony I fear I shall never be your heiress."

"Why can't you fancy Philip Arnison?"

"Because I detest him."

"It is not like you to lock down on a man because he is poor."

"I have disliked Mr. Arnison from the first moment of our acquaintance. I believe you are utterly deceived in him, and that he is a scheming adventurer."

Lord Chesney was very angry at this plain speaking.

"I am not quite in my dotage," he said, irritably, "though you seem to think so. I consider I am quite as good a judge of character as a child of a girl like you!"

"Please don't be angry," pleaded Beryl. "Oh, grandpapa, leave Mr. Arnison everything you have, but don't be angry with me now!"

"I am not angry," said the peer, in a mollified tone. "You are young and prejudiced. I think I had better settle my affairs without consulting you. Send Marion Bolton here, and tell her I want some letters written."

His cousin soon appeared. She was fond of the grim old nobleman, but her love for Beryl was the strongest feeling of her heart. Little doubts as to the service she would give if consulted as to Lord Chesney's will.

"You are a sensible woman, Marion," he began, amiably, "so just answer me one plain question. Why does Beryl dislike Phil Arnison?"

No question could have been more difficult to answer. Poor Mrs. Bolton was silent from sheer inability to speak.

"Come, come, of course you are in her confidence. Why does she dislike him?"

"Perhaps I am not a fair judge, for I dislike him too," observed the widow.

"Oh, you do. Why, pray?"

"I think to be dishonest. He tried to persuade you he is in love with Beryl, but in your absence he is barely polite to her, and I know at the time he said these things he tried to cast doubts on her identity."

"Is there anyone else?"

"I don't understand."

"I will put it plainer. Is there anyone in the world whom Beryl prefers to Arnison?"

"Oh, no!" said the housekeeper, with a sigh of relief that there was a question she could answer. "Beryl dislikes all men."

"And why?"

This was a poser. At last, seeing she was not to be let off, Marion Bolton replied in a strange mixture of truth and fiction. The fiction, let us hope, was forgiven her by the recording angel, since she spoke it to save Beryl's cherished secret.

"I think, Lord Chesney, there was someone she cared for before ever she came here, and that he, believing her a poor girl, trifled with her affections, and that having been once disappointed she will never listen to any professions of love again."

"Humph! Perhaps he'll come back when he hears she is my heiress."

"It wouldn't be the least use, Lord Chesney. I am certain Beryl would never believe in him again."

"And what was his name?"

"I never heard."

"Humph! In what rank of life was he? I suppose you know that much?"

"He was a gentleman," said Mrs. Bolton, simply, "and I believe he was in the army, but I am not sure. Anyway, he left England and settled in Australia before ever Beryl came to Chesney Towers."

"Why in the world couldn't she say so?"

"Girls don't talk of such things," said kind old Cousin Marion. "I dare say he has married someone else by this time, and forgotten poor Beryl."

"My grandchild is not 'poor Beryl,'" said Lord Chesney, proudly. "The scoundrel shall live to rue the day he deceived her."

The lawyer was sent for, and arrived the following afternoon. Mr. Grover had been Lord Chesney's confidential adviser for years, and had real regret at finding him in such danger.

Being, however, a man of clear judgment and sound common sense, he had long distrusted Philip Arnison, and desired nothing better than that individual should find himself excluded from the will.

"Your grandchild is your natural heiress," he advised the peer. "Mr. Arnison has not the remotest claim on your fortune!"

"He was my wife's kinsman," replied Lord Chesney, "and I have always liked him. I can't disinherit Beryl, but I mean to give Phil a chance of the property."

Poor Mr. Grover! It had fallen to his lot to draw up some very peculiar wills in his time, but never one which struck him as quite so eccentric as Lord Chesney's.

The peer left Chesney Towers and its revenues to his grandchild, Beryl, until she reached the age of thirty. If she was still unmarried on her thirtieth birthday both estate and income passed to Philip Arnison for his natural life, and his heirs after him; except that the property was charged with an allowance of a thousand a-year for Beryl until her death.

If, however, she married before her thirtieth birthday she at once attained the exclusive possession of The Towers, with entail to her children, unless it could be proved that her husband was not a gentleman.

Poor Mr. Grover was so galled at this point that he stepped Lord Chesney's instructions, and informed him the property would be eaten up with law-suits, for no two people could ever agree what constituted a gentleman; on which the peer suggested that if Beryl's husband had been educated at one of the English Universities, or could prove that he was the son or grandson of anyone received by the testator as an equal, he should be considered a "gentleman" for all intents and purposes of the will.

Failing these qualifications, his father must have a title or lower title, or a baronetcy, or have served in the army or navy.

This knotty point decided, Lord Chesney reverted to the terms of his will. Supposing Beryl married anyone (not a gentleman) everything went at once to Philip Arnison.

Fifty thousand pounds in the funds were bequeathed to Beryl absolutely, and five hundred a-year to Marion Bolton. Servants, friends, and acquaintances were liberally remembered, but still Walter Grover did not cordially approve of the will.

It seemed to him hard that if the youthful heiress preferred a single life she must pay to heavy a price for it; and he did not like the clause which asserted Lord Chesney's desires which would be fulfilled by a marriage between her and Philip Arnison.

Also knowing Mr. Arnison to be utterly unscrupulous, what should hinder his introducing Beryl to some fascinating stranger, who might be a gentleman in thought and feeling, and yet not comply with the conditions of the will?

"It seems to me," reflected the lawyer, "the most famous physicians of the day would be taboed, and all foreigners, unless their ancestors had travelled in England. I don't like the will, and I only hope Lord Chesney will get better, and make a fresh one."

But the hope was futile. The peer sank rapidly. It seemed as though his will once made his earthly existences were over, and he gave himself up to the weakness which oppressed him. He died on the first of September, with Beryl's hand locked fast in his.

It was early morning when his spirit fled; and poor Beryl, with aching heart and tearful eyes, crept away to her own room to rest after her long vigil.

Mrs. Bolton followed, and with tender entreaties begged her to try and sleep.

"He does not need you any longer now, dear!" said the kind-hearted woman; "and I can send off the telegram for Mr. Grover without troubling you."

"Shall you send for Mr. Arnison?"

"I shall leave that for the lawyer to decide," said Mrs. Bolton, who, with Beryl, was still ignorant of the contents of Lord Chesney's will. "But, my darling, do try and not fret over that. Even if Philip Arnison is master there he cannot disturb you till after the funeral. Lord Chesney always told me he meant to leave me a little income, and surely you know I would share my last crust with you!"

Beryl was sobbing softly to herself.

"I know, dear!" she whispered. "But I am afraid of Philip Arnison. There are times when I fancy he suspects my secret."

"Try and sleep," urged Mrs. Bolton, kindly. "It is seven o'clock now. I will tell the servants not to disturb you before noon."

But it was only a little after nine when she herself went back to Beryl's room, with such a grave, troubled face that the girl, who was awake, felt certain fresh sorrow was at hand.

"Goody! What has happened? Has Mr. Arnison arrived?"

"No, my dear Beryl, but I have had news from Glenziara."

A strange flush came into Beryl's wan cheeks.

"Has Mrs. Arnold's patient died? But why should she write to us? We have nothing in the world to do with Sir Basil Lyndon?"

"Nothing in the world," agreed Goody. "But Mrs. Arnold says nothing about Sir Basil. Are you strong enough to read this, Beryl?" and she held towards her an open telegram.

Lady Chesney—to give her the title that was to be her own hereafter, even if estates and fortune went from her—took the paper eagerly and read the brief message, with a wild look of pain in her beautiful eyes, which went to Mrs. Bolton's heart.

It was very short. But its import was terrible to these two lonely women.

"Please come at once," great trouble about it."

The message was made out to Mrs.

Bolton," and it was sent by Margaret Arnold. The two women looked at each other.

"I must go at once," it was Beryl who spoke.

"My dear, you are not fit for the journey. Let me go and learn all particulars?"

"I could not stay here," said Beryl, feverishly. "The suspense would kill me. Besides, Goody, think of all there is to do! Mr. Grover will be here this afternoon, and perhaps Philip Arnison. I could not stay here and listen to their long business conversation, while all the time I was hungering for news! I must go to Glenfranks, and you must stay here and receive the lawyer! You can tell him I am ill. Heaven knows it is true enough!" she said bitterly, "for my head feels on fire, and my heart is well-nigh broken!"

CHAPTER XIV.

It was impossible to keep from Lady Lyndon that her son was decidedly worse; but John Campbell and Mrs. Arnold were careful she and Jessy should not even guess at the cause of his strange relapse.

It was easy to manage this, for both mother and daughter knew very little about illness; and both had been so anxious about Basil that they were more astounded than surprised when Mrs. Arnold told them at breakfast the invalid was so much worse that they must leave him entirely to her and the doctors for some hours.

The only person to resent this was Paulina. She had showed very little attention to her brother, and yet she seemed manifestly annoyed at being excluded from his room.

"I think Sir Basil's own relations ought to be with him if he is worse!" she said crossly. "Oh, I don't blame you, Mrs. Arnold. I dare say you were persuaded into this ridiculous step by that ignorant surgeon! I don't believe he is a doctor at all!"

Jessy glanced at her indignantly. Poor Lady Lyndon looked quite ashamed; but the nurse only said, quietly,—

"As it happens, Miss Lyndon, I know him to be an English M.D.; but the wish to keep Sir Basil free from any excitement is my thought as much as his. Indeed, I am going to ask Lady Lyndon if I may be allowed to change your room. I think if you have the one Dr. Campbell now occupies, and he has the dressing-room, he will be able to go in and out to Sir Basil much more easily. Your brother cannot be left alone at night now!"

The stress on the last word was marked, but it made no impression on Paulina. She declared gaily she should prefer to be further away from the sick room, and that she would go and move her things at once.

"I should prefer to do that myself when Sir Basil is awake. Just now he is sleeping!" said Mrs. Arnold.

She went upstairs as she spoke, and entered the little slip, occupied the night before by Paulina.

She carefully looked the door on to the landing, and then tried that leading to Sir Basil's room. It was unlocked, though she distinctly remembered fastening it, and removing the key the day of Paulina's arrival.

"Is looks bad," she thought, sadly. "Besides, how did Miss Lyndon get the key?"

That difficulty was soon solved. The locks in the cottage were very simple, and no doubt the key of one of the dressing-room doors opened the other; but still Mrs. Arnold felt perplexed. Paulina was so young—little more than a child in years. She had been brought up under her mother's own care, and it seemed almost impossible she should have attempted the life of her own brother.

It was a relief to the anxious nurse when John Campbell came out of the sick room.

"He is sleeping quite peacefully! Where can I speak to you?"

She led the way back to the dressing-room, opened the door of communication so that they could watch over Sir Basil, and then told

the doctor, in a whisper, of her proposed change of rooms, and Paulina's consent to it.

"Didn't she seem alarmed at your suggesting it?"

"Not in the least. She is annoyed at being excluded from her brother; but she seemed quite pleased at the other place."

"Do you think we are wronging her?"

"I can form no idea! What was it?"

Then, seeing he did not understand, "What drug was used?"

"Laudanum!"

"Has he any recollection of it?"

"None whatever. Poor fellow! he has taken so many composing draughts lately, I suppose he has got used to them!"

"But surely he remembers who gave it him?"

"He remembers nothing after we left him last night. It seems a bad business. Do you think I had better tell Blythe?"

She hesitated.

"Can you tell him without implicating Miss Lyndon?"

"I can try!"

He put the case to the local physician simply. They had left Sir Basil to pass the night alone; and undoubtedly, poison had been administered to him, though not in sufficient quantity to destroy life. What was to be done next—move him?

"Certainly not. At The Cottage he is under Mrs. Arnold's authority, and she can, at least, dictate what people enter the house. At an hotel he would be in far more danger."

"And you will come and see him?"

"Certainly; but, Dr. Campbell, I am afraid it is not a case for our skill. Say what he likes against my theory, I am certain Sir Basil has a hidden foe. Till this enemy is discovered your friend's life is in constant peril."

"Poor Mrs. Arnold! Her first idea was suspicion would fall on herself and me since we were the only strangers in the house!"

"She's a good woman! You know, Campbell, anyone could break into that cottage. It would be the easiest thing to put a short ladder against the wall and climb into Sir Basil's room by the window!"

John Campbell felt relieved.

"Then you don't think it was anyone in the house?"

"Surely you do not suspect Lady Lyndon or Miss Jessy?"

"Miss Lyndon is at Glenfranks now. You have not met her yet, Dr. Blythe!"

"I don't believe any daughter of Lady Lyndon would be capable of such a crime," said the country practitioner, warmly, "and I feel sure in my own mind the same hand which stabbed Sir Basil in the train administered the poison last night. All I can urge on you is constant watchfulness. He ought never to be alone a minute!"

Lady Lyndon insisted on seeing Dr. Blythe; but, warned by John Campbell, he said nothing to her of the laudanum. He was introduced to Paulina, and seemed much struck with her beauty. But his remark to Mrs. Arnold, as he gave her his last instructions, was a strange one.

"Take care you don't have another invalid on your hands. Miss Lyndon looks to me just ripe for a nervous fever."

Sir Basil was better as the day wore on, and Jessy was allowed to go and sit with him. To her surprise a new visitor was in the room. Mrs. Arnold's little girl, a beautiful child of four, whom Jack Campbell always thought most resemble her dead father, since she had no trait of likeness to her mother.

Basil and the little one seemed the best of friends. Birdie, indeed, had quite taken him into her heart; but there was a strange sadness in his face as he stroked her pretty curls.

"What a darling!" exclaimed Jessy.

"Why have I never seen her before?"

"Because she stays at her aunt's now. The Cottage is so full, but she has come home to-day to see her mother."

"She is beautiful!" said Jessy, who, loved

children dearly. "We used to think Babette pretty; but she would never have compared with this child; and, Basil," dropping her voice, "how exquisitely she is dressed! You can't understand, I suppose, being a man, but the embroidery on her pinafore is fit for a princess! I expect she is Mrs. Arnold's darling!"

But the baby, who had been listening to the last words, shook her head sadly.

"Gilly's mother's darling!" she said, regretfully, "not Birdie!"

"Is Gilly your little sister?" asked Basil.

"No, Birdie's brother. Birdie not like Gilly, he so black."

Sir Basil laughed heartily.

"Fancy an atom like that being jealous!"

Mrs. Arnold came to fetch the little girl, saying her aunt was waiting for her. Jessy, who had taken a fancy to the child, led her downstairs herself. She found Mrs. Hall, whom she had often met at the cottage, with a little boy whose sullen heavy face, and black, mocking eyes seemed to fill her with a strange aversion.

"What a contrast they are!" she said simply.

Kate Hall smiled.

"My husband once called them Beauty and the Beast, Miss Lyndon, but it is a very sore subject with my sister. Her whole heart seems bowed up in Gilly. She can't bear for anyone to praise the little girl."

"They are neither of them like their mother!" said Jessy, thoughtfully. "I suppose they take after Mr. Arnold?"

"I never saw him. Everyone admires Birdie. A lady who was here last summer painted her picture. You may have seen it, Miss Lyndon; it hangs in the bedroom she usually has when she comes down here."

Paulina was sitting in the parlour with the window open, and she heard the last words. Coming quickly into the passage she joined the little group at the door, and asked Mrs. Hall if she could tell her who painted the picture?

She knew from Philip Arnison that Miss Chesney was a born artist, and a strange suspicion came to her that this lady, who was at The Cottage often enough to have a room there called hers, and who had still enough to paint the little girl's likeness, might be the heiress, the secret of whose intimacy with Margaret Arnold Paul wanted so much to discover.

"It was Mrs. Bolton painted it," the station-master's wife explained. "She is a young widow, Miss Lyndon, and my sister nursed her once through a dangerous illness. I fancy she has been delicate ever since, and so very often her aunt, Miss Chesney, brings her down for a few days' change."

"I know some Chesneys," said Paulina, lightly. "A very good old family."

"I can't tell anything about that, miss. I've never set eyes on Mrs. Bolton. People hereabouts fancy she's not quite right, for when she's at Glenfranks she never goes beyond the cottage and garden. Miss Chesney's a pleasant lady enough, hard on fifty. I should think. She's just wrapped up in her niece, but it doesn't prevent her having a kind word for everyone."

Mrs. Hall and the children went on their way. The sisters returned to the sitting-room.

"Where is the picture, Paulina? I should like to see it."

"In the bedroom I am sleeping in now. It is wonderfully well done, if it is really the work of a mad woman."

"A mad woman!" said Mrs. Arnold, coming in at that moment. "My dear young lady, Mrs. Bolton is no more mad than you are. She had had a great deal of trouble, and she dreads strangers; but she is not in the least insane. She is very fond of Birdie; and when she is here the child follows her about almost like her shadow. Miss Chesney often says she spoils her, but Mrs. Bolton loves all children."

Paulina Lyndon felt in a dilemma. She

was quite positive Mrs. Arnold spoke what she believed to be the truth; but it did not at all fit in with Phil's description. According to him the heiress was young; from the nurse's story Miss Chesney was near fifty, and had a grown-up niece. For hours she pondered over the mystery. She could remember every word of the letter Phil had showed her, signed "B. Chesney," and which warned Mrs. Arnold if a Mr. Arnison came to her and asked questions he was to be told nothing. The words ran, "he is not our friend." Surely, then, Miss Chesney had a candidate besides Mrs. Arnold? At last the truth flashed upon Paulina like a sudden revelation. In their great fear of discovery the two women had changed their names and identities. Lord Chesney's grandchild and heiress had come to Glenfriers as the widowed Mrs. Bolton, and her elderly chaperone and kinswoman had been called Miss Chesney.

But why in the world did they take so much trouble? Paulina felt herself on the brink of a great discovery. Phil urged there was some dark secret in Beryl Chesney's past which, if known, would make her grandfather disinherited her. Well, it must be dark indeed, if it necessitated her changing her name.

Why was "Mrs. Bolton" so carefully kept from the sight of strangers? Why did Margaret Arnold assert she had seen so much trouble? What was the secret which would explain everything?

Paulina was awake all that night trying to fathom it. The next day she went into Garby by herself, and sent off a telegram to Mr. Arnison, addressed to his London club. It was very short, but it told all he wanted to know.

"Am on the point of success, but cannot win the prize until I have seen you."

She looked out for a letter the next morning, but none came. The following day brought her no better result. She grew weary of the confinement of The Cottage, and started for a long walk. Jessy declined to bear her company lest Basil should want her; but Lady Lyndon, really anxious about Paulina's pale cheeks, and fortified by the belief that Mr. Arnison was safe at Elton Park, raised no objections to her going alone.

As she passed down the one straggling street of Glenfriers, outside the village inn she saw a swarthy-looking gipsy woman playing the "Last Rose of Summer" on a very wheezy concertina. Paulina could not tell what enthralled her to the spot till the very last variation had been painfully squeezed out. She tossed the woman a penny, and was turning away, when amid the jargon of foreign thanks which greeted her offering, she caught these English words—

"Garby Wood, three o'clock."

Paulina looked at her watch and found it wanted a quarter to three. She might keep this strange appointment easily; and even if anyone reported her being in the woods to her mother no surprise would be aroused, since it was the prettiest walk in the neighbourhood, and at any other time would have been full of children, but three o'clock found all these in school.

The rustic lovers did not begin their promenades till evening. The hard-worked mothers of families were busy at home, and few people who had leisure would choose to face the glare of the August sun so early.

Paulina reached the wood five minutes before the appointed time. Panoptically as the clock struck three the gipsy appeared, gave one searching look to see they were alone, pushed back the red hood, and disclosed the crisp, black curly hair of Philip Arnison.

"Phil!"

"My dear child, don't take the whole world into our confidence. I wanted to see you, and I could think of no better disguise. I will pull up my hood again, and then, if anyone comes by, I am only a poor gipsy telling your fortune!"

"I thought you were at Elton Park?"

"I left two or three days ago, through the insolence of your sisters, but it made very little difference to me. I had no wish to stay in Sussex while you were in Warwickshire. And now to business. First, how is your brother?"

"He was going on very well till Monday; then he had a strange sort of attack, and he has been worse ever since. Mrs. Arnold and the doctor keep me out of the room, and don't tell me anything; but from all I can pick up I am sure they think he has been poisoned!"

"By whom?"

"It is absurd; but they fancy the man who attempted his life before has followed him here."

If, indeed, she had had a hand in that midnight crime her self-possession was wonderful; her voice never faltered. She spoke as naturally and innocently as Jessy or her mother could have done.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Arnison, carelessly. "Depend upon it, Paulina, your brother is a doomed man, and before the year is out my darling will be mistress of Lyndon Hall!"

Paulina looked up into his face with eyes breathing only love and tenderness. Whatever her faults, and they were many, she had this superiority over Philip. She was capable of true, passionate affection, while he cared for nothing really but himself.

"What did you mean by your telegram?" he asked, suddenly.

"That I had discovered something, but could not go any further without a clue. Mrs. Arnold speaks of Miss Chesney without any mystery at all, but she declares she is nearly fifty, and not at all good-looking."

"When, I mean, did she come to know her?"

"Miss Chesney's niece, Mrs. Bolton, had a dangerous illness, and Mrs. Arnold nursed her back to health. They think a great deal of Mrs. Arnold, and often come here."

"And—I can see you know something more!"

"It is only an idea of mine. You say Beryl Chesney has a secret. Do you think it is possible that she was married to someone beneath her before ever Lord Chesney took her to live with him? Do you think she was the young widow, Mrs. Bolton, and the supposed Miss Chesney only a friend?"

"You have got it. Mrs. Bolton is Lord Chesney's housekeeper and cousin. She's just wrapped up in Beryl. Of course they changed names; but there must be something more. If the husband is dead, where is the need for so much mystery?"

"He is dead. He was dead before Mrs. Arnold ever saw them."

"Well?"

"As much as I have told you everyone here knows, but I believe I can guess the secret between Mrs. Arnold and your cousin, Beryl."

"Well, I can't. Unless it is that she is, or has been, married."

"There is a child here," said Paulina, slowly, "who calls Mrs. Arnold mother—a beautiful little girl; but Mrs. Arnold does not seem to care for her as much as she does for a hideous little boy much older. Well, everyone says Mrs. Bolton is devoted to this little girl, and she has painted a picture of the child which hangs over her bed when she stays here."

"And you think—"

"I haven't finished yet. When Mrs. Bolton is here no one ever sees her, Miss Chesney goes in and among the cottagers; Mrs. Bolton never stirs. Phil, I believe she is a widow, and that this Birdie is her child. She knows Lord Chesney would disinherit her if he heard of the little girl's existence, and how her mother deceived him. She has trusted Mrs. Arnold with everything except her name. She comes here because she loves the child, but she dares not be seen abroad lest anyone should notice Birdie's resemblance to her!"

"Paulina! you are a magician!"

"Only a woman, who loves you and tries to please you, Phil!"

"If you are right you have made our fortune, Paulina; but before we can be positive I must see this child!"

(To be continued.)

ALETHEA'S ORDEAL.

CHAPTER XL.—(continued.)

"Suz is the same—Lady Leopold Wycherly! Your resemblance to each other is marvellous!"

"I noticed it, but she is much more beautiful than I," said Natalie, humbly. "It was that resemblance that made me lay aside my bonnet and shawl and leave them in the wood, when I came here to night. I thought if I were seen I should not be disturbed, as I should be taken for her ladyship. May I go now, lady?"

Miss Wycherly reflected.

The girl's face pleased her—its very pride and defiance touching a chord in her own heart. It was hard to look into Natalie's blue eyes and think they mirrored an untruthful soul. It was impossible to resist playing and trusting the deceived and deserted young wife.

"Suppose I let you go," the lady said, thoughtfully. "What will you do? Shall you return home?"

"No, lady, never," replied Natalie, desperately. "I do not know what I shall do! Perhaps end my troubles in the nearest stream, for I am friendless, homeless, and hopeless."

"You have no right to contemplate self-destruction!" exclaimed Miss Wycherly, severely. "I believe it to be my duty to befriend you, and I will do it. With my aid you may yet be recognised as a lawful wife!"

Natalie sprang forward impulsively, falling on her knees before Miss Alethea, and covering her hand with tears and kisses.

"Let me stay with you," she cried, "and I will be your ladyship's slave!"

"I do not want you for a slave, Natalie, but you may be my friend. I am sure I can trust your discretion and gratitude. If I allow you to remain, I shall want you to confine yourself to my rooms, and never be seen out of them, unless you go forth at night for exercise. I will not keep you here long, as I have not sufficient room for you. Will you promise to keep yourself so secluded here that no one shall suspect your presence? Also, that whatever you may see or hear in these rooms shall never be spoken of outside them, or to any being but me?"

"I promise!" answered the girl, solemnly.

"I will trust you. And now let me explain who I am. I am the sister of the late Earl of Templecombe, and the aunt of Lady Leopold Wycherly, the owner of the Castle. I am Miss Wycherly. As the present Earl is my relative, I have hope of compelling him to do you justice, but you must first prove to me beyond all manner of doubt that he is your false husband. You can point out your Elmer to-morrow when the young people go to ride. These jealousies will protect you from observation. Rest yourself on the couch, Natalie, while I consult with my attendant in regard to your accommodation!"

"Well, you saw this girl, Alison?" she said, simply.

"Yes, my lady. She's the very moral of Lady Leopold—only not quite so fresh and bright. If she had Lady Leopold's dark eyes she'd be prettier!"

Miss Wycherly rapidly narrated the story told her by Natalie, the nurse being her confidential friend, and the only one, except her boy and Richard Lyne, to whom she ever unbent, and confided.

"You see, of course, Alison, that I must

be friend this poor young girl, who looks at me with a face like that of my niece, and who would destroy herself if I should turn her away. I will send her to the hidden outlage in a day or two, there to remain until a favourable change in affairs."

"Yes, my lady. But are you sure her husband is the Earl? May it not be the Marquis of Waldemere? He is bad enough for anything—"

"But not for that, Alison!" cried her mistress in sharp tones of pain. "Besides, her husband is young, and the Marquis, you know, is grey-haired!"

"True, my lady. Do you want this young girl to see Arthur?"

"No. I will take him to the secret chambers and put him to bed there, while you attend upon Natalie, and bid her sleep where she is!"

Alison hastened to obey. Natalie was too weary to disrobe herself, having spent the previous night in the grotto, where she had slept little.

The good old nurse brushed out the tangled mass of golden hair, removed the travel-stained clothing, and put upon the girl the dainty garments of Miss Wycherly.

And then she brought sheets and a pillow, spread them upon the yielding couch, conducted Natalie to it, and watched beside her until she slept. When the girl's breathing had become quite regular, the nurse softly withdrew the key from the door, gathered the soiled garments in her arms, and retreated into the inner chamber, which she found deserted.

CHAPTER XI.

What can I pay thee for this noble usage,
But grateful praise! so Heaven itself is paid.
—*Rome.*

NATALIE still slept, on the succeeding morning, when Miss Wycherly entered the little parlour and stood at her side, regarding her attentively by the morning light. The resemblance of the girl to Lady Leopoldo was more than ever striking, now that her blue eyes were veiled from sight, and her hostess could scarcely persuade herself that she was not looking upon the face of her niece.

"Strange, wonderful!" she murmured. "The resemblance is a most extraordinary coincidence!"

Alison came up behind her mistress, echoing her words.

"Open up the upper part of the shutters, Alison," said Miss Wycherly. "and let in the light. As soon as Miss Natalie awakens, you may attend upon her. In the meantime, you may wait upon me!"

The woman hastened to rearrange the *jalousies* in such a manner that while they admitted the light an occupant of the room could not be seen from without, and she then followed her mistress to the inner room.

When Natalie at length awakened, bars of sunlight glittered upon the carpet, and the clock on the mantelpiece pointed to the hour of ten.

She sprang to her feet, with a look and exclamation of bewilderment at her novel surroundings, but her memory had fully asserted itself, when Alison entered her presence.

"I hope you slept well, miss," said the nurse, with genuine good feeling. "My mistress has gone to her breakfast, and left orders about yours. I will show you to her dressing-closet!"

Noticing that her garments had been withdrawn, Natalie silently followed the attendant to the inner chamber to a dressing-closet at one side of it.

"When you are dressed, miss, you will find me in the ante-chamber. Should you want me, you have but to ring."

With these words Alison withdrew, and Natalie, securing the door after her, looked curiously around.

The dressing-closet was a small, square room, lighted from the inner chamber by a large pane of glass in the top of the connecting door, and furnished simply, but elegantly, with a thick carpet, a soft couch and two long mirrors opposite each other.

A small closet at one side served as a wardrobe, and on the other side a door half-open admitted to a beautiful bath-room, where a marble bath, shaped like a sea shell, tempted her to enter. It was nearly filled with perfumed water, and Natalie experienced a feeling of restfulness and pleasure as she timidly stepped into it.

On emerging from the bath she found new garments placed for her in convenient proximity, and hastened to attire herself in them. She brushed her golden hair smoothly from her face, caught in at the waist the morning dress of pale blue cashmere by a silver cord, and after a glance at her reflection in the mirrors returned to the ante-chamber.

She found a dainty breakfast awaiting her, and Alison attended upon her while she partook of it, occasionally making some remark of inquiry calculated to make the young girl feel at home.

When she had concluded her repast, Alison enjoined her to be very cautious, and not once to leave the room, and herself departed with the silver and its contents.

She had scarcely disappeared when Miss Wycherly entered the room.

She greeted Natalie very kindly, inquired how she had slept, and then said,—

"My guests are going out on the lawn now, Natalie, and you shall have an opportunity to point out to me your false husband!"

She threw open the windows and bade Natalie look through the crevices in the *jalousie* herself standing beside her.

The young people were all on the lawn.

Basil Montmaur and the Misses Braithwaite were grouped together, and Lady Leopoldo and Lady Ellen Haigh were both smiling at some speech made by Lord Templecombe, as he tendered each a rose he had just plucked.

Sir Wilton Werner was gazing abstractedly into the distance.

"But one gentleman of all my guests is absent from that group, Natalie," said Miss Wycherly. "You have therefore full opportunity—"

She paused, as Natalie uttered an exclamation.

"That is he, Miss Wycherly, the gentleman with the grey morning coat. He is not the Earl—"

"Yes, he is Lord Templecombe. It is a serious charge you make against him, Natalie, and I cannot see how I can aid you. The future will present a chance, perhaps. You see that I do not doubt your story. I know now of whose handwriting that in your letter reminds me. Let me look at it again!"

Natalie extended the missive, and Miss Wycherly compared it with one she had recently received from the Earl.

The result of the examination was to confirm her convictions, and she returned the letter in silence.

"Go into the inner chamber, Natalie," she said, "and wait there until I call for you. I wish now to hold an interview with my niece!"

Natalie withdrew, and Miss Wycherly sent Alison, who had just returned, to Lady Leopoldo, requesting her presence in the eastern tower.

The message was delivered without attracting observation from the guests, and Leopoldo entered her aunt's presence, in some wonder at this unusual summons.

"Be seated, my dear Leopoldo!" said Miss Wycherly, when she found herself alone with her niece. "I have much to say to you. You are aware that I received an application from your kinsman, Lord Templecombe, and that I granted him my approbation of his suit, referring him, of course, to you!"

"I am aware of it, Aunt Alethea," was the low-toned reply.

"You know also how strong I have favoured a marriage between you and the Earl, Leopoldo. It has long been a favourite idea with me to behold you the Countess of Templecombe, and the mistress of the estates which go with the title. I may, consequently, have influenced your heart in his behalf. Tell me, Leopoldo, do you love him?"

The maiden replied in the negative, adding,—

"Except as a cousin, you know, auntie."

"Thank Heaven! I have feared otherwise. I should never forgive myself, Leopoldo, if I had been the means of causing your unhappiness. You are sure that it will not give you a single pain to relinquish him entirely?"

"Dear Aunt Alethea, I see you do not yet understand my sentiments towards my cousin. He has not yet asked me to marry him; therefore I have not rejected him. I—I love another!"

The confession was made with blushes and confusion, and gave Miss Wycherly a momentary relief, but her brow soon clouded with a sudden suspicion, and she said,—

"One of our guests, Leopoldo?"

"Yes, Aunt Alethea!"

"The Marquis of Waldemere?" and Miss Alethea's tones rang out quick and sharp.

"No, auntie," answered the maiden, in surprise. "I have promised myself to— to Basil!"

"To Basil!" repeated Miss Wycherly, with a revulsion of feeling. "You have chosen wisely and well, Leopoldo. Basil has a noble heart and generous soul. You will be very happy with him, I doubt not. If your parents were living, I am sure they would approve your choice!" and Miss Alethea bestowed upon her lovely niece a kiss of approval.

"I am glad you are pleased, Aunt Alethea. Basil proposed to speak to you to-day about our engagement. We want your sanction, but I should like it to remain a secret until after the departure of our guests!"

"You are right, my dear."

"How singular, auntie, that you should have thought of the Marquis of Waldemere when I spoke of loving another than Van—. I have known the Marquis so short a time, and he is so stern and strange—"

A ghastly smile flitted over Miss Wycherly's lips, and she hurriedly answered,—

"I suppose I thought of him, Leopoldo, because the match would be so extremely unsuitable."

"Aunt Alethea, why did Lord Waldemere come to the Castle? He was certainly not invited, and he seems to dislike you, while I have noticed that you do not like him. If you do not want him here, why should not Basil send him away?"

"Not for worlds!" cried Miss Wycherly, agitatedly.

"You fear he would cause you trouble? If you have ever need of a defender, Aunt Alethea, Basil would be only too glad to undertake your defence."

"I have no need of defenders, Leopoldo!" responded her aunt, coldly. "Your romantic brain must have been turned by those old-time romances of which you are so fond. Forgive me, dear," she added, as Leopoldo's eyes grew with tears. "I did not mean to wound your feelings. Believe me, I do justice to the affection you and Basil feel for me. I love you both very dearly, but you know I am not demonstrative."

Leopoldo was quite satisfied with this *amende*, but loomed to throw herself in her aunt's arms, and entreat her to allow herself to be loved and cherished by her young relatives, but she felt too much in awe of her to put her longing into execution.

"We are wandering from our subject—the Earl," resumed Miss Wycherly. "I have a communication to make concerning him which you should hear, and which you must keep secret, even from Basil!"

Leopoldo made the required promise, and her aunt continued,—

"I have reason to believe that Vane is already married—"

"Married?"

"Yes, Leopolds. But whether legally or not I do not know. While he was devoting himself to you last winter he had a wife in the country whom he frequently visited. This wife he has now repudiated!"

"Are you sure this tale is true, Aunt Alethes?"

"I know it, Leo; yet I am convinced of its truth. It may be that by some evasion of the law he is free to marry again, yet he was married in church, by a clergyman now dead. His poor young wife has nothing to show in proof of her statements except her truthful face, and a letter she sent her, earning her off!"

"You have seen her then, Aunt Alethes?"

"I have. She is the picture of yourself, Leo, and might well pass for you, although her voice sounds differently, and her eyes are blue. I met her in the corridor last evening and called her by your name. She had just visited Lord Templecombe's room, in the vain hope of finding the certificate of her marriage, and was endeavouring to escape from the Castle!"

"How did she know he was here?"

"She tracked him from London, through his valet. He married her under an assumed name; but I will let her tell story for herself."

Miss Wycherly rose and summoned Natalie, who entered the ante-chamber timidly, with evident awe of the lady to whom she was to be introduced.

Lady Leopolds advanced to greet her, and then paused abruptly, regarding her in silent amazement.

"You are astonished at the resemblance she bears to you, Leopolds?" said her aunt. "Yet, seeing you together, the resemblance does not seem so striking as before."

The darkness of Leopolds's eyes, which gave such charming piquancy to her strikingly beautiful face, was almost the only difference between the faces of the two young girls. Natalie's habitually defiant expression relieved her countenance of the timidity or insipidity often attendant upon blonde beauty; but her charms lacked the sparkling freshness of her noble counterpart.

"You are the wife of my cousin Vane, my aunt tells me?" said Leopolds, at length taking Natalie's hand, and leading her to a sofa.

"You mean Lord Templecombe?" ventured the daunted young wife, timidly. "I did not know he was an Earl. He said he was a gentleman's son, and called himself Elmer Kere. If I had known his rank I should have fled from him! for I would have known that an Earl could mean no good to one like me!"

"Tell me all about it," said Leopolds, sympathizingly.

Natalie did so, pouring forth her emotions in passionate utterance that thrilled Leopolds with convictions of their truth, detailing all her adventures since leaving Afton Grange, even finding courage to tell the sympathizing girl beside her about the unselfish devotion of Hugh Bauld, and the assistance he had rendered her.

She concluded by exhibiting the letter which had so crushed all her hopes, and Leopolds read it, with eyes flashing with indignation.

"Poor girl!" she said, drawing Natalie closer, and kissing her. "Do not shrink from me, Natalie. If you are Vane's wife you are my cousin. Where was it you met your husband first, after tracking him to the Castle?"

"By the fountain in the edge of the park, lady!"

Leopolds changed colour, remembering what her lover had said, thinking it was she who had taken part in that scene.

"And what do you intend to do now?" she asked.

"I do not know, lady. Miss Wycherly has

promised to be my friend, and my life is in her hands!"

"I desire to keep Natalie's presence secret, Leopolds," said Miss Alethes, "until a favourable opportunity shall present itself to operate in her favour. If I were to confront her with Vane now he would disown her, or his marriage with her. We can only be patient, and let Natalie continue her efforts to obtain proofs of her marriage. It is possible that the certificate is not destroyed, or that the missing leaf of the register may be still in existence. We will hope the best."

Leopolds echoed her aunt's opinions, and Miss Wycherly went on to say that she should send Natalie to one of her farms that very evening, and that she could return nightly to the Castle for news of the Earl, or to visit his rooms in search of the required proofs.

"I could keep her in my rooms in the other tower, Aunt Alethes," suggested Leopolds. "They are directly under Vane's."

"It would not do. Your maid would see her, and the mystery of Natalie's resemblance to you and her resolution would immediately become food for rumours and gossip. I have decided wisely, as you will discover!"

The young girls acquiesced in this decision, and, after a prolonged interview, Leopolds embraced Natalie tenderly—promising to see her again before evening, and begging her to take renewed hope and courage, for she would be her friend and sister—and then returned to her guests.

CHAPTER XXII.

Hear, solemn Jove, and conscious Venus, hear!
And then, bright maid, believe me whilst I swear;
No time, no change, no future flame shall move
The well-placed basis of my lasting love.

—Prior.

Whither my heart is gone, there follows my hand,
and not elsewhere,

For where the heart goes before, like a lamp, and
illuminates the pathway,

Many things are made clear that else lie hidden in
darkness. —Longfellow's "Evangeline."

ALL the generous sympathies of Lady Leopolds had been enlisted in Natalie Afton's favour, and, as she returned to her guests, her thoughts lingered with the deserted young wife, and she wished, with all the fervour of her ardent nature, that hers might be the hand to sweep the dark clouds from Natalie's life, and that through her agency the young girl might be recognised as the honoured wife of the Earl of Templecombe and the sharer of his family honours.

No thought of Natalie's humble birth and fortunes came to swerve her mind from its convictions of truth and justice. She did not shrink from acknowledging the yeoman's granddaughter as her cousin's wife, nor did it occur to her that the grandeur of the family name would be obscured or tarnished should Natalie Afton be acknowledged as the Countess of Templecombe.

Lady Leopolds possessed a scrupulous sense of honour, and the loftiest principles. She had a fair share of pride in the name she bore, and in the family title—the bearers of which had always ennobled it, instead of being ennobled by it—and she would have preferred for her cousin an alliance with a family as noble and as honoured as her own.

But she gave no thought to her preferences now—the question of Right and Wrong demanding her every consideration.

Natalie Afton had been wooed or won by the Earl, had been married to him in church by a clergyman, and that union so solemnly ratified could not be lightly dissolved. To Lady Leopolds's earnest sense of right the marriage was none the less binding because the Earl gave a false name, and went up to the altar with a villainous design of wronging the fair young girl who had trusted all to him.

Had Natalie been a coarse, ill-favoured girl, it is quite probable that Lady Leopolds might

have had a severe struggle with her pride; but there was nothing in the young wife's appearance to suggest her plebeian origin. Endowed with an aristocratic beauty and grace, a refinement of manner and an innate delicacy that showed itself in every word and action, Natalie was an interesting study—the more so because of the remarkable resemblance she bore to Leopolds, and her ladyship almost lost sight of the difference in rank between them.

Natalie's despairing face haunted her even in her gayest moments throughout that day, and the young girl's plaintive tones seemed ever sounding in her ears.

After dinner, leaving Miss Wycherly in the drawing-room with her guests, Leopolds went to the eastern tower to visit the concealed visitor. Natalie herself unlocked the door, giving her admittance, uttering a pleased exclamation as she recognised her.

"I thought it was Miss Wycherly who knocked," she said, confidently. "Mrs. Murray is in the next room, and asked me to admit her mistress."

"My aunt is engaged at present, Natalie. She knows I am here to see you. I could not let you go without a few more words of consolation and encouragement!"

"Thank you, lady," replied Natalie, gratefully. "You have comforted me greatly already, and awakened in me a desire to live, even if life should yield me little happiness! Oh, I wish I could stay with you always! It seems to me that I have known you years instead of hours. Would you make me your companion, lady?"

"Call me Leopolds, Natalie," was the kind response. "I feel as great an interest in you as you can feel in me, and I should like to have you always with me. If you fail to obtain the recognition you seek from your husband, you shall live with me and become my friend and companion. I have an idea, that, despite the difference in our social positions, you and I have kindred souls, and should live together. Nature cast our features in the same mould, and the moment I beheld you my heart warmed towards you, and I longed to be your friend and obtain your affection!"

Thus speaking Leopolds folded her arms around Natalie's slight form, and drew the weary head to her bosom with an air of protecting tenderness.

"If Vane won't own you," she said, earnestly, "I will adopt you as my friend and sister. Will not my love and esteem be worth living for?"

"Oh, yes, a thousand times, yes!" cried Natalie, impulsively kissing the hand which clasped her own. "I have been so lonely all my life, dear Leopolds, that your promise of affection and protection makes me almost happy again. I would do anything for you!"

"Would you? Then cheer up, and be patient and hopeful. These clouds that look so black to you now must clear away sometime. But yesterday evening everything seemed dark and threatening to you; yet to-day you have gained two friends—Aunt Alethes and myself—and who knows but that to-morrow may have further blessings in store?"

Natalie smiled cheerfully at these kind words, and pressed Leopolds's hand fervently.

"We must deserve happiness, if we want to have it," continued Lady Leopolds, with a sweet serenity in her purple eyes that spoke of a blissful peace in her soul. "The next best thing to positive joy is the consciousness that we have done well and deserve to be blest. If we keep our own souls pure, the wrongs that we may suffer will not do us permanent injury, but will strengthen and ennoble us, and fit us to better enjoy the happiness that must inevitably succeed them. It is a pleasant doctrine, that of compensation. For all the tears you have shed, for all the despair you have felt, you will be rewarded, by and by, with tenfold joy!"

Natalie looked up into Leopolds's face with

a reverential admiration, as if she were gazing into the countenance of an inspired prophetess.

"I do not intend to preach to you, Natalie," continued Leopolde. "These truths have gone home to your soul, I see, and it is not necessary for me to dwell upon them. So change the subject—the wrongs you may endure should never cause you to wrong others!"

"I do not understand you—"

"Have you acquainted your friends with your movements? You have told me little of your former life, save that you lived at Afion Grange; but have not you left there mourning parents, or brothers and sisters, who grieve over your disappearance, and who would eagerly welcome tidings of you?"

"No, Leopolde," answered Natalie, somewhat bitterly. "I have no parents, no brothers nor sisters. I lived with my grandmother and uncle, two unsocial beings, who did not like me, and who turned me from their doors when I told them of my marriage, and that I did not know my husband's name!"

"Poor girl! Why did they dislike you? It is very strange—"

"No, lady," replied Natalie, drooping her head. "I cannot impose upon your goodness and benevolence by concealing from you who and what I really am. Perhaps I risk your friendship by the confession—for surely a stranger would have less pity than my relatives—I—and her fair head drooped still lower upon her breast—"I bear my mother's name!"

"But why?" asked Lady Leopolde, not comprehending what Natalie meant to convey. "Did your mother marry against your parents' will?"

"Oh, lady! They never knew my father's name! My mother fled from her home—a young girl with an honoured name, and many suitors of her own rank in life. Who she went with remains to this day a mystery. She returned two or three years later, with a little child in her arms—a hopeless woman, saying only that her husband was dead. That child was me. She never made any explanations, never cleared her name in the eyes of the world, or her relatives, and sank finally into the grave with the secret of my paternity untold. She now lies in a nameless grave, not even the name she once bore, 'Amy Afion,' being cut upon the stone that covers her!"

"Poor Amy!" said Lady Leopolde, with plying tears. "The fate of her daughter must be keenly felt. Do you think I shall turn from you, Natalie, now that I know your sad history you have more than ever need of kindness. At times, perhaps, that you should not acquaint your relatives with your movements until you shall have made every effort to clear your name. They would doubtless refuse all offers of consolation from you, unless you could go to them as an acknowledged wife. But dry your tears, Natalie," she added, "and give your thoughts to the present. Your dress is not suitable for your little journey this evening to the farmhouse, where Aunt Althea wishes to send you. My clothes will fit you better than Aunt's dressing-gown, I am sure!"

Without waiting for a reply, Leopolde left the room, hastening to her own apartments on the same floor, in the opposite tower.

She was not absent long, returning with a pale, blue robe, of some soft, flimsy material, a knitted shawl and a hawl of blue and white, and a neat cottage bonnet of fine straw, trimmed with blue ribbons and cornflowers.

"These garments are all that is needed to perfect your resemblance to me, Natalie," she said. "Put them on, and let me see what impression I make upon others, for I have worn that dress often!"

She seated herself, while Natalie put on the soft blue robe and knitted shawl, without hesitation and with murmured thanks.

And even to be looking at myself, Natalie!

commented Lady Leopolde, when the young girl's toilet was complete. "I never realised before that I was so very fair—"

She paused, blushing, and Natalie blushed too: at the attitudinal compliment rendered her.

Leopolde was still gazing upon her lovely counterpart, when the door opened and Miss Wycherly entered.

"How fortunate that you are dressed to go out, Natalie!" she said, abruptly. "My farmer, John Perkins, has just come up to the Castle with a supply of vegetables in his waggon, and you will go away very soon. The moon has not yet risen, and you will have no better time to-night than now to steal out unobserved. He knows you are intending to go home with him. He has instructions to treat you with the utmost respect, and to keep your presence at his cottage secret. You had better steal out through the park to the road, where he will stop to take you up!"

"I wish we could keep her here, Aunt Althea!" sighed Leopolde, as Natalie hesitated to do so on her bonnet.

"But you see we cannot, dear!" returned Miss Wycherly. "She can come and see us every evening, and visit you in your chambers at night!"

Natalie promised Lady Leopolde that she would visit her every night, if possible, and then embraced her tenderly, Leopolde folding her in her arms.

She then approached Miss Wycherly, who quietly extended her hand, which the girl kissed fervently.

Miss Althea then summoned her waiting-woman, and bade her escort Miss Afion down the private staircase to the lawn.

As soon as Natalie had followed Alison to the inner chamber Miss Wycherly dismissed her niece, who took her way to the drawing-room, from one of the windows of which she endeavoured to trace the outline of Natalie's departing figure.

Giving up the attempt a few minutes later, as she heard the wheels of a farmer's waggon rumbling in the distance, Leopolde devoted herself to the entertainment of her guests.

When the moon arose the young people strayed out upon the terrace and into the conservatory, and Leopolde found herself separated from the rest, and alone upon the drawing-room balcony.

The solitude was not displeasing to her, and she gave herself up to reflection, in which the merry tones of her guests floated pleasantly.

Her solitude was destined to be of short duration.

She had distinguished Basil's laugh among the rest, and was eagerly listening to it, when Lord Templecombe entered the drawing-room and caught sight of her.

"All alone here, Leopolde?" he said, advancing to the balcony. "You are playing hermit, I suppose? You have a cosy nook here, and a pleasant view!"

"You seem to appreciate it as well as myself, Vane," replied Leopolde, quietly. "Is it a lovely evening, is it not?"

"Yes. On such a night one ought to be happy, I think. Do you see that dark figure pacing restlessly under the trees in the edge of the park? That is Lord Waldemere. I wonder he remains at the Castle to brighten everybody's pleasure. He bears continually a thundercloud on his face!"

"He brightens no one's pleasure, I am very sure, Vane," returned Leopolde, gently. "Lady Ellen Haigh is fascinated by the gloom of which you complain, and the other ladies regard the Marquis with great interest!"

"You also, Leo?"

"I cannot resist the popular impression, Vane," said Leopolde, lightly. "I pity the Marquis, and I will not deny that I am charmed by his stern and haughty manner—"

"Charmed as a tender bird is charmed by the deadly serpent!" interrupted her cousin.

"No—you are wrong. The Marquis is a man of terrible pique, I really believe. He

feels strongly in all things. He would hate with a terrific ferocity, and love with equal strength. He might, in a moment of passion, be cruel, remorseless, and revengeful; but I believe that his nature is noble, and that under his hard exterior is concealed a heart as tender and gentle as a woman's!"

"I see you are indeed strongly interested in the Marquis," observed Lord Templecombe, in a tone of pique. "You seem to share Lady Ellen's fancy that he is a Lara, or a Conrad, or other equally romantic personage. The truth is, I believe, he assumes all that gloom just to excite such admiration in women's breasts. Perhaps he aspires to the hand of Lady Leopolde?"

The maiden was silent.

"I know you have many admirers, dear Leopolde," continued the Earl, drawing nearer to her and lowering his tones, "but you have none more earnest or more devoted than I! If I possessed the gift of eloquence I would delight in dwelling upon the love I bear you and the hopes I have cherished that you will deign to accept my hand and heart, and grace the title last borne by your mother! As I am not thus gifted I can only say that your beauty has inspired in me the profoundest passion; that I lay my heart at your feet, and that I beg you to bless me by an acceptance of my suit!"

Lord Templecombe's voice was eager and earnest, showing that he was really deeply in love with his beautiful cousin, but his manner was so self-possessed that it was evident to Leopolde that he had little fear of a refusal.

And her observation was not at fault.

His lordship had but lately consulted his mirror, and was in high favour with himself, his vanity expressing a woman's. He had, moreover, been reflecting upon his worldly honours, &c., and had come to the conclusion that his cousin could appreciate them as well as himself, and that she would never be so foolish as to refuse to share in them.

After a few moments' hesitation, Lady Leopolde said, in a clear, cold tone,—

"I will not affect to be surprised at this avowal of your affection for me, Cousin Vane. I know that you recently wrote to Aunt Althea, begging her approval to your intended suit, and that she granted it. But you must have seen during this visit at the Castle that I have avoided seeing you alone, and that my manner has not encouraged you."

"Pardon me, Leo, but your manner has been all that I could have hoped for. I could not have expected you to show any decided warmth towards me under the circumstances, and your very coldness and avoidance have filled my heart with the most delightful hopes! You have shown such a maidenly modesty, such a charming reserve, that my love has increased in strength each day. Have I read your heart aright?"

He endeavoured to encircle her with his arms, but she put him from her with a quiet dignity, saying,—

"You misunderstand me strangely, my lord. My coldness resulted from a desire to avoid the unpleasant interview now taking place. I hoped you would have sufficient perception to read my conduct rightly, and spare me the pain of refusing you. Since you have not done so, I will now say I cannot be your wife!"

The Earl regarded her in amazement, ejaculating,—

"You reject me?"

"Absolutely, my lord!"

The Earl refused to receive this decision, the very quiescence of the maiden's manner causing him to think that she merely wished to test her power over him. He therefore said—

"You will give me a reason for this rejection, will you not, Leopolde? You have not been fascinated into a consent to marry Lord Waldemere, I hope?"

She answered in the negative.

His lordship then breathed free. The

remaining guests were his inferiors in rank, and he deemed it absurd to inquire in regard to Leopold's sentiments towards them, albeit he was not without misgivings as to Basil Montmaur. Conceiving her to be piqued at some inattention on his part, he urged the question.

"You will explain why you refuse me, will you not, Leo?"

"I am influenced by various reasons, my lord. One of them is a desire to be not only loved, but to have the first and best love of a true heart. I do not like the down rubbed off the peach offered to me!"

"If that is your objection to me, Leopold, it is groundless. I not only love you, but I have never loved before. No beauty like yours has ever before flashed across my vision, and no beauty can be lovely in my eyes unless it is like yours!"

"True, you may not have encountered violet eyes and yellow hair on the same person before, my lord," remarked Leopold, saucily. "but have you never looked lovingly into blue eyes?"

The Earl started, and looked suspiciously at his cousin's face.

"Blue eyes!" he repeated. "No, never! What makes you think—?"

Lady Leopold was strongly tempted to reveal her knowledge of the deception practised upon Natalie Afton by the man before her, but a timely recollection of her promise of secrecy restrained her.

"I have nothing further to say, my lord," she answered, ignoring his question. "I have given you my decision, and I beg that I may hear no more upon this subject!"

The Earl persisted in urging her to reconsider her refusal, dilating upon the grandeur and pleasures she would enjoy as his Countess, but he finally discovered that his words were vain.

"You love another, then?" he cried, wrathfully.

Leopold was about to reply, when a well-known footstep sounded in the drawing-room, and her face lighted up as she turned to smile upon her favoured suitor.

Basil, seeing his betrothed in company with her cousin, would have withdrawn but for that detaining smile, and, beholding his approach, the Earl became assured of the identity of his rival.

Even in that moment of rage he whispered to Lady Leopold a request that his proposal might remain a secret, and then, with a careless bow to Basil, he strolled away, with affected carelessness.

"You look sad, Basil?" said Leopold, noticing her lover's weary air.

"Your eyes are keen, my darling!" he answered, stepping upon the balcony beside her. "I am sad. I have been troubled to-day. Tell me, Leopold, are you a somnambulist?"

"No, not that I am aware of, Basil. Why do you ask such a strange question?"

"Because," replied Basil, "I witnessed something last evening that causes me to think that you walk in your sleep. I saw you on the floor above your own—"

Lady Leopold started, remembering that Natalie had visited the Earl's chamber, and she wondered if Natalie's movements had been watched by Basil.

"What was there strange about my presence on the third floor, Basil?" she asked, with a tumultuous beating at her heart.

"I shrink from telling you, my darling. I cannot tell you. If you were asleep, I implore you to let your maid watch your nightly slumbers. Some harm may happen to you in your wanderings!"

"If you thought you saw me walking in my sleep last night, Basil, why did you not follow me?"

"I did, until I became convinced—oh, Leopold!—that you were broad awake! To-day, I know not what to think. If I had really believed you in a state of somnambulism I

should have rushed after you, and taken you to your room. I—I thought otherwise!"

Leopold's cheek burned hotly, and she was upon the point of explaining the mystery to her lover, even at the risk of breaking her promise, when the desire to try Basil's faith in her determined her to withhold for the present any explanations.

"Basil," she said, tenderly, "I am sure you think no evil of me. You cannot think evil of your promised wife!"

Her lover took her face between his hands, turning it gently so that the light might fall upon it, and then he looked steadily into her eyes.

The scrutiny satisfied him, for he concluded the investigation by earnest caresses, and said, sadly,—

"I trust you, darling, fully and implicitly, as I would trust a sinless angel! You were asleep—"

"No, Basil. I never walk in my sleep. You did not see me last evening at all. You were deceived in thinking it was me. I know all about it, although I was not aware that you shared my knowledge. Have faith in me, Basil!"

"I have! I have!" returned her lover, in tones that testified to his sincerity. "Since you say it was not you, sleeping or waking, I believe you! You have banished my grief—yet I wish you would explain the mystery now!"

Leopold answered by an arch smile and shake of her head, and Basil declared himself willing to wait until she was free to explain, his betrothed assuring him that the secret was not hers to give.

CHAPTER X.V.

The wildest ills that darken life
Are rapture to the bosom's strife;
The tempest, in its blackest form,
Is beauty to the bosom's storm;
The ocean, lashed to fury loud,
Its high wave mingling with the cloud,
Is peaceful, sweet serenity,
To anger's dark and stormy sea.

—J. W. Eastburne.

As Lord Templecombe passed out upon the portico, after his refusal by Lady Leopold, he encountered his friend, Sir Wilton Werner, who regarded his hushed and annoyed countenance understandingly, and with an air of sympathy. Thrusting his arm through the Earl's, the Baronet led him down the steps into a secluded path, and finally said,—

"I see you have no need of congratulation, my lord. Lady Leopold declined the honour you offered her?"

His lordship nodded assent, not yet able to trust his voice to speak.

"I am surprised—yet, possibly, she is only trying her power over you. Shall you accept the refusal as final, and leave the Castle?"

"No, I shall not lightly relinquish a hope which has become the mainspring of my life, nor will I yield the field to a rival. Lady Leopold will guard the secret of my rejection, and I hope to induce her to reverse her decision. I must think the matter over and decide upon a plan that shall contain the elements of success. You shall assist me with it, Werner, but not to-night!"

"To-morrow, then; but do not give yourself up to melancholy, Templecombe, or go about with a sad countenance, in which Montmaur may read your rejection, and take courage to offer his suit. Take my advice, and devote yourself to Lady Ellen High, or Miss Braithwaite, and your cousin will be piqued into a kinder behaviour to you!"

This counsel met with a favourable reception from the Earl, who turned immediately towards the Castle, saying,—

"You are right, Werner. All women have a love of power, and, I doubt not, Lady Leopold feels an exultation in having made me miserable. If I remain unchanged in look and manner she will be piqued, as you suggested,

and I shall not find it difficult to win her. I fear that Montmaur may be a more dangerous rival than we have suspected, and I would like you to observe him narrowly. As yet, I think he has not come to an understanding with Lady Leopold!"

"Then I will do my best to prevent one! He passed into the drawing-room just before you came out! Yes, there he is on the balcony with Lady Leopold. Join the guests, Templecombe, and be yourself, while I interrupt the *de à die* that might prove inimical to your interests!"

The friends ascended the steps together, and Lord Templecombe then hastened to join the guests, while Sir Wilton Werner sauntered through the corridor into the drawing-room.

The lovers started consciously at his entrance, and an embarrassed silence succeeded their late animated conversation. These facts were noted by the Baronet, even while he appeared to see and hear nothing, and his keen eyes discovered Leopold's hand was clasped in Basil's under cover of her scarf.

The first effort of Sir Wilton, in the character of a marplot, was quite successful; the lovers soon quitting the balcony in search of their friends, leaving the Baronet to the solitude of the drawing-room.

"Very good!" thought Sir Wilton, with a satisfied smile. "I have made a discovery. These young people have come to an understanding with each other, and Templecombe's way is more difficult. I must see him without delay!"

He started with that intention, but changed his mind on encountering Miss Wycherly at the drawing-room door.

He was, unquestionably, devoted to the interests of his friends, but, very naturally, considered first his own interests, and it was to further them that he relinquished all immediate thought of Lord Templecombe, and re-entered the room with Miss Alethea.

He was too wily to propose to her precipitately, or to risk his fate without having first paid assiduous court to her, and endeavoured to interest her in himself. He was not particularly anxious to settle the question that occupied his mind until he should become quite sure that it would be settled in his favour.

Miss Wycherly seemed thoughtful and self-absorbed, so that many of the Baronet's rather brilliant remarks passed unheeded by her, to his inward mortification, and many of her replies were totally irrelevant to the subjects under discussion.

But, suddenly, as a footstep was heard ascending the marble steps of the portico, Miss Alethea's manner changed.

Her pale, statue-like face assumed a look of animation; her abstracted gaze changed to one of quiet interest; and her proud lips curved into a gentle smile.

Sir Wilton ascribed this change in her manner and expression to his latest remark, and redoubled his attentions to her, and efforts to please her, just as the Marquis of Waldemere entered the room.

His lordship looked moodily at the lady and her companion, and then seated himself at a little table, where, under pretence of examining some trinkets, he kept up a severe scrutiny upon Miss Wycherly, who affected to be absorbed in the Baronet's remarks.

Sir Wilton made the most of the opportunity thus accorded him, and had begun to flatter himself that he had made a most decided impression upon his lovely hostess, when the remainder of the guests re-entered the drawing-room, and Lady Leopold took her seat at the piano, playing a song that had been solicited of her.

Miss Wycherly gave place beside her to Miss Emily Braithwaite, and soon after left the room so quietly that even the Baronet did not observe her retreat.

But one person witnessed it, and that person was Lord Waldemere.

With a stern compression of the lips, and a

resolute gleam in his eyes, he silently arose and went after her.

She was not in the corridor, nor upon the portico, when he reached it, and his lordship began to breathe more freely, when he observed a stately figure, in feminine drapery, and with a scarf thrown carelessly over her head, gliding across the lawn, into the shadow of the trees bordering the home park.

The scarf was Lady Leopold's, but the figure was Miss Wycherly's.

A few minutes' observation convinced the Marquis that Miss Alethea was about to visit the fountain-glade, although by a circuitous route, and, seeing his teeth hard together, he resolved to follow her thither.

Waiting until a friendly cloud obscured the brightness of the moon he left the Castle, rapidly traversed the lawn, and gained the park, then hastily making his way towards the fountain-glade.

He approached it cautiously, hearing voices, and finally paused in the shadow of the trees encircling it, his eyes glazing upon the scene they beheld.

The circular glade had never been lovelier than at that moment, surrounded by bending, whispering trees, with its green sward bathed in moonlight; and with its graceful fountain in the centre tossing up the spray that looked like liquid silver, and that fell again to the basin with gentle murmur.

But not upon these things did Lord Waldemere look!

He regarded only the two persons, who, with clasped hands, stood within the glade, and whose words, low-sounded as they were, distinctly reached his hearing.

Those two persons were Miss Alethea and Richard Layne.

"I received your note this morning, dear Alethea," Richard Layne was saying, his boyish face bent over towards the lady, "and have, as you see, kept the appointment you made. I have not visited the hidden cottage to-day, of course, and the time has been long and lonely upon my hands. Why did you forbid me to visit the Castle openly to-day, as I nearly always have done daily since you came here to live?"

"I have a private communication to make to you, Richard, and Lord Waldemere watches me so closely that no other course than this was open to me. I believe he would intrude upon us if you should call as you have heretofore done. You know that I have brought Arthur to the Castle?"

"You mentioned the fact in your letter! But was not the step dangerous? You did not explain your reasons—"

"I could not, except in a personal interview. Oh, Richard, the secret we have guarded so carefully is discovered!"

"What do you mean?" cried Richard Layne, in a startled voice.

"Lord Waldemere has discovered Arthur's existence!"

"Impossible!" ejaculated Layne, with a look of mingled apprehension and dismay. "Why, Alethea, you must be dreaming! Your fears have produced this illusion!"

He folded his arm around her and gently conducted her unsteady steps to the marble seat at a little distance from Lord Waldemere, who silently retreated a few steps, his burning eyes gleaming out at them through his sheltering darkness.

"No, I have not been dreaming," answered Miss Wycherly, not rejecting the arm that still enfolded her. "The Marquis came upon us yesterday at the hidden cottage, and witnessed the entire scene with Arthur. He remained behind us to question Mary Perkins. John Perkins called at the Castle soon after, and told me all his lordship had said!"

"My poor Alethea!"

"On entering the library, some time after John's departure, I encountered the Marquis, who refused to permit my egress from his presence until he had overwhelmed me with threats, haunts, and reproaches. He declared he knew the boy to be mine—else I should

have been tempted to deny the fact. You can guess what else he said!"

"Yes, I can guess it all," answered Layne, his fair cheek blushing.

"He threatened to wound me through the boy, Richard, and I feared he would injure him! Should he do so, how could I complain? I could not drag my story before the world, and he knew it. And so, to save Arthur, I had the little fellow brought to the Castle, where he is safely hidden, and where no one suspects his existence, save Alison and me. Have I done well?"

"Yes, dear, well and justly. But is it not possible that the Marquis may discover the lad's absence from the cottage, and suspect his stay at the Castle?"

"It is possible; but he will never have any opportunity to verify the suspicions he may form. Should I be closely pressed by him, I shall send Arthur to you. You can secure the boy's safety by taking him from this neighbourhood until after the departure of the Marquis!"

Richard Layne warmly approved this decision, and declared his willingness to depart with the lad at any moment Miss Wycherly should appoint.

"I knew I could depend upon you," said Miss Alethea, leaning her head wearily upon his shoulder. "But for you and Arthur, I should pray to die!"

"But for our sakes you will be cheerful and happy, will you not, dear Alethea?"

The lady smiled faintly and then moaned,—

"I will be cheerful, but I cannot be happy while my son must remain unrecognized. He is such a bright, intelligent lad, so brave and spirited, and yet so gentle! His nature is as joyous and joy-giving as yours. I should be very proud to own him as my son, but that is impossible! What shall we do with him as he grows in years and knowledge? We cannot keep him shut up for ever!"

"True, dear! I have thought of a plan by which he may mingle with the world without being wounded by inquiries in regard to his parentage. Let me introduce him as my adopted son, Richard Arthur Layne. I can let it be generally understood that he is my nephew, and no one will be ill-bred enough to question me farther!"

"Your plan is better than any I have devised, and I think we will have to adopt it, But not quite yet! I must have him a little longer to myself before I give him up, even to you!"

Richard Layne replied only by an affectionate smile, at sight of which Lord Waldemere almost gasped at his teeth.

"We must avoid secret meetings," said Layne, thoughtfully. "I shall continue to visit you frequently at the Castle, and we can correspond faithfully. If any of your guests were to know of our meeting a wrong interpretation might be put upon it, and Lord Waldemere would be sure to find in it fresh cause for hatred and persecution. Are you sure your absence has been unnoticed this evening?"

"Quite sure. I left our guests engaged with music, and I do not think that even one of them could have noticed my withdrawal. If any one did it will be supposed that I have retired to my own rooms, where I spend most of my time. But I must return. You will come over to-morrow?"

Layne replied in the affirmative, and the lady arose, exchanged a few sentences with him, in such low tones that Lord Waldemere failed to catch their meaning, and she then quitted the glade, going towards the Castle.

Richard returned to his seat.

The joyous look he generally wore had given place to an expression of the utmost anxiety, and from a muttered exclamation that escaped his lips, the Marquis knew that he was thinking of the communication he had just received from Miss Wycherly's lips.

For some minutes they were silent, the watcher and the watched, and then Richard

Layne bent forward, and lifted from the ground a bow of ribbon that had fallen from Miss Alethea's robe.

"Poor Alethea!" he murmured, putting the ribbon in his pocket. "If I could but clear away the shadows that environ her!"

The words still trembled on his lips, when Lord Waldemere dashed into the glade.

Richard Layne sprang to his feet confronting him.

The two men regarded each other for some moments without speaking, but there was a deadly storm in the eyes of the Marquis, before which Layne shrank back appalled.

The former was the first to speak.

"Miscreant! villain!" he ejaculated, hoarsely. "Give me that love-token you just put into your pocket!"

Layne hesitated, and handed the Marquis the ribbon of which he had just become possessed, saying,—

"It is no love-token, my lord. I found it at my feet!"

"Where it has dropped for your benefit!" sneered his lordship, transferring the bit of silk to his own pocket. "I know you and Alethea Wycherly thoroughly. Do not think you have either of you deceived me. To spare you any denial, or self-exculpation, I will state that I have heard nearly every word of your late interview, and I congratulate you upon the ingenuity you have shown in providing for the future of your son! That was certainly a most brilliant idea of yours—to adopt young Arthur Layne!"

Richard looked astonished, and taunted the Marquis with having acted the discreditable part of listener.

"Has not the result justified the act?" retorted his lordship. "I did not come here with a deliberate design to listen, but, once here, I could not help it. Do not feign a virtuous indignation at my baseness, Richard Layne, and lose sight of the enormity of your own conduct!"

Layne made no attempt at a response, and Lord Waldemere continued speaking harshly of Miss Wycherly, and inveighing bitterly against her champion.

"You are not the man to speak against Alethea Wycherly, or against me, Lord Waldemere!" at length cried Richard, stung to anger. "Who are you who presume to sit in judgment upon us? You have been the cause of Alethea's life! But for you she might have been blessed and happy among women; for years you have been the nightmare of her existence! I do not wonder that she turns pale at the mention of your name, or shudders in horror from your presence!"

The Marquis fairly resented at this declaration, but the next moment he reassured himself, exclaiming,—

"Nor do I wonder at it! She best knows the reason of her terror! No wonder that I have her—with an awful, undying hatred!"

The passion with which these words were uttered died out of his lordship's voice as he repeated the last word, and grew pale as if alarmed at his own assertion.

(To be continued.)

A GIRL'S HEART.

CHAPTER XXI.

LORD TAUNTON was not long in making his way to the general drive leading up to the Abbey, and, as luck would have it, he saw in the distance the cart from which he had alighted so short a time ago, and which, having safely deposited Miss Glenes at the door, was going leisurely towards the stables.

Hugo shouted to the man, and flung up his hand as a signal and in a few minutes the cart was alongside him. He dismissed the man, and drove himself by as short a cut as possible to where it would be nearest and easiest to reach Alwynne.

Arrived as this point he twisted the reins round a sturdy, low-hung bough, and pushed hurriedly through the grass to the spot where he had left her.

The old leathered trunk was where it had been these many years, but there was no woman seated on it—no graceful, fragile form, no wan, beautiful face.

Hugo looked about from right to left. There was no sign of her. He had a sudden, painful fear at his heart that she might have fainted and fallen. But though he moved about, looking anxiously, carefully, he could see no trace of her.

With a set look and contracted brows he went back to the cart and unhooked the reins. He did not get into the vehicle, but walked beside the horse, leading it. As he turned to look back. At this bend he saw in the distance two forms—one a man, the other a woman.

It was she! His heart seemed to beat and throb to suffocation as he recognised the man to be her husband.

It was not very clear to Hugo, in thinking matters over afterwards, how he got back to the Abbey. There was such a miserable bewilderment in his brain, a confusion of suffering, of exultation, of anger and resentment mingling with his deepened love, and the yearning that the sight of Alwynne had only served to strengthen and intensify.

He made his way mechanically to his study—a room on the ground floor—and sat down by the table, staring with unseeing eyes at the old familiar pictures, and the endless rows of books that lined the walls.

Thought seemed suspended for the moment. He was only conscious of the dull ache in his breast, and the sharp, contracting pain in his eyes. He was weary, too, from the long, wakeful night hours that had passed over his head, but yet he had no wish to sleep.

The voice of Jack Trevelyan just outside the door awakened him from his momentary trance. The necessity for concealment came to him in the awakening. He took up a pen, and began writing as his brother-in-law came in.

"How is Gus?" he asked, not looking up, but evidently deeply engrossed in his writing.

"Dropped off to sleep at last. She isn't used to pain, and she has managed to get about as bad a headache as any mortal need desire. I don't disturb you, do I, old chap?"

Lord Taunton said "no," and went on writing.

He had not the least notion what the substance of his letter was. He had commenced one to his lawyer, and had progressed so far as the date and the opening sentence acknowledging the receipt of some legal communications. Beyond that his brain did not travel; and as John Trevelyan threw himself into a chair and took up a paper, his pen came to a sudden stop.

He was still for so long a time that the other looked round at last.

"You don't look up to much this morning, Hugo?" he said, involuntarily, struck by the changed expression and colouring in the keen, handsome face. "Something in the air, I suppose?"

"It is one of my bad days," Lord Taunton said, with a good deal of indifference in his voice and manner. "I get like this now and again. General sort of seediness—means nothing. Goes off in a few hours."

Jack Trevelyan lay back in his chair and smoked his pipe thoughtfully for a few minutes.

"I am afraid I know what your complaint is, Hugo, old chap?"

Hugo looked at him questioningly.

"You have got your wandering mood on again. You have had enough of this quiet, home-drum life and long to be off again. I can sympathise with you. I know exactly how you feel. Been through it myself. Even when I got my dear wife I couldn't quite knock the old roving craze out of my brains the first go off. It comes natural to us men. Movement sometimes is the very breath of

our nostrils, and," continued Mr. Trevelyan, leaning forward to knock some ashes out of his pipe, "and it can't be expected that you can settle down here right away. Why don't you take a run abroad for a week or two? Go to Paris! You have not been there for years. Farish up your French. It is wonderful what a lot of good a trip across the Channel does one sometimes! Come with you, if you like."

Lord Taunton put his pen down and leaned back in his chair. Trevelyan's words carried a sense of sympathy that accorded well with his present mood.

His one conscious desire was to be gone—to be out in some wild distant spot, with the heavens wide above him, and nature only as his companion.

He felt all of a sudden a sense of being cribbed, cabined, and confined, even in this spacious and beautiful home of his. He had a longing for some wild, blustering wind to pour down upon him, to feel the sting and the salt of the sea beat on his face!

His heart had a lighter throb for a moment, and then he forgot his own pleasure, and remembered her. If he should do this! If he should once more turn his back on his duties; on his possessions, on his position, she would suffer a double sorrow.

He must not forget this for a moment. In all his actions he must study her, so that she should at least be spared pain through him.

Not he must abandon the thought of a flight back to the great countries from which he had come. He must shut his eyes to the altitudes of a life of freedom and of isolation—at least, for a time—until he was better acquainted with the conditions of her life, until he had assured himself that in all senses save of the heart it was well with her.

The danger of this position did not strike him in this instant; the misery that he must endure at the daily, hourly knowledge that she was so near him, yet that she was so utterly lost to him. This did not form itself tangibly, definitely, for the moment.

He was so long in answering that Jack Trevelyan laughed slightly, though there was something of an anxious expression round his mouth and in his eyes.

"Well! What do you say? Shall we give the Frenchy a turn?"

Hugo roused himself.

"Is isn't a bad idea? But what will Gus say?" he asked, hurriedly.

"Oh! so long as I am with you she will be content," Mr. Trevelyan laughed, and smoked his pipe leisurely for a moment. "She knows I am sure to turn up again; whereas if you took to your wings all alone—" He did not go on for a few seconds, and then he said, quietly, "You know she fretted herself almost to a shade about you sometimes, old chap. She does love you so dearly. If I ever had the faintest suspicion of jealousy for any one it should be for you; for I don't know—'pon my soul I don't—which Gus loves the most, you or me?"

Lord Taunton pushed himself out of his chair, and walked to the fireplace, standing before it thoughtfully.

"I won't give her such cause for anxiety again, Jack!" he said, quietly, after this pause. "You've hit the nail on the head, old chap. I have got my wandering mood on, and if I consulted my own inclinations alone I should be off to-night for Kamshatska or the North Pole. A fellow can't rub off all his odd corners at first. In time I shall settle down, I suppose; but there's something in the wilderness, the risk, and the delight of going out to fight big game that does a lot to knock off any worries that may come along. However," with a slight laugh that was not very merry, "if we all were of this opinion, and took to our heels as soon as we had to face a bit of trouble, well, the North Pole would be overstocked, and the white bears would be exhausted, to say nothing of showing decent shabby treatment to the old country—eh, Jack!"

"Well, when you can't get the North Pole try Paris!" was Mr. Trevelyan's reply, lightly given. To himself he was busy thinking, "I have hit one bit of the right nail on the head, but not the whole. There is some bother on hand. What is it—old or new? He's a good actor, but he can't quite hide this poor old chap! I wish I could help him. It is jolly hard that we can't come to the scratch and share the mind troubles as well as those of the body; but Hugo must always fight alone. One knows that by experience, no matter how bad or how big, the trouble may be!"

"It sounds feasible," Hugo answered, "only what am I to say to Gus? If I take you away she will scalp me!"

"Let's put her to the test!" Mr. Trevelyan smoked his pipe on thoughtfully for another few minutes. He got wonderful inspirations from this old-cherished companion. "Perhaps," he said, putting it down at last, "perhaps, though, it would be just as well if you took a little rush off somewhere by yourself. I have been a married Benedict for so long. I've got rusty, as it were, and—"

"Dear old Jack!" Hugo said quietly, and his hand went out with one of those eloquent gestures which speak more than words.

"I'll make it all right with Gus," Jack went on, as he clasped the strong, tanned hand in his for a moment, "and endeavour to impress upon her the fact that you are not gone for years. I expect she will be more philosophical about your departure than—well, than Miss Glenzie, for instance!"

Hugo did not answer this. In truth, he only heard it vaguely. He was wondering if this short journey would be misconstrued by her when it came to her ears.

She had besought him so piteously not to go away, and yet—yet she must know, she must feel, that to stay on so near to her was something more than he could endure.

His heart flamed with hot emotion and suffering as he pictured what the life would mean.

For one second he blamed her. If she had married, was there need to have come and advertised this marriage in the very precincts of his home?

The blame was short-lived, for as thought—active thought—had returned to him he had realised that there was a whole history connected with this strange marriage which he had to hear—an explanation which he must gather, not from her, but from Blair Hunter; and if that were not possible, then from future circumstances.

He passed his hand over his brow and stood pondering. His resolution was taken at last.

He would go away for the moment; but he would let her know that he was going. He would not let the fact she had no crested come to her when she learnt of his absence.

He dropped his hand suddenly.

"Jack," he said, "I shall start for Paris to-night!"

Mr. Trevelyan rose to his giant height.

"That's right, old chap! The best thing to do. Of course you'll get your traps together easily! Nothing I can do, I suppose?"

Hugo moved to the writing table and sat down.

"Yes," he said, quietly. "Would you mind riding over to Torre village? I want to send a letter to Mrs. Blair. I would rather not give it to a servant, or wait till the post. I want her to get it at once."

Jack Trevelyan frowned a little, but not with anger. There was a pained look in his honest eyes.

He stood knocking his pipe mechanically against the fireplace. The ashes were all emptied, but he did not notice this.

As Hugo rose and confronted him, he took the letter silently and put it in his coat-pocket.

"I shall deliver it early this afternoon. I was going to Torre to see Steward." He paused for a moment; and then said, a flush mounting to his face, "Forgive me, old chap. May I ask you one question? Is it the old trouble, or a new one?"

Lord Taunton looked into his eyes. "It's a new one, Jack; and it is something even worse to hear than the old one, something harder, something more bitter and cruel! Don't ask me any more, old fellow! I can't talk of it yet. I hardly dare think of it. I have always prided myself on being as tough as most men. I weathered the last storm; I may weather this, but—"

The sentence was left unfinished, and Jack Trevelyan walked out of the room without another word.

CHAPTER XXII.

LORD TAUNTON had been in Paris nearly a fortnight, when one morning he received a letter written in Jack Trevelyan's big, ungainly scrawl. It contained little odds and ends of news about the estate, and many little jokes and anecdotes about Lady Gus, giving her latest escapade with her year-old baby, and mentioned, in the most casual way, the fact that the Torre-origami and his pretty young wife had gone away for some time.

Hugo understood the purpose of this letter perfectly. It had been written simply and solely to convey this last piece of information. Who shall say that women monopolize all the sympathy of the world?

There was a letter from Lady Gus, too, all splashes and dashes.

"Can't send you much of an epistle, dearest and sweetest of brothers. I am in the most awful muddle! I am painting some of the rooms upstairs—have got in about a ton of Aspicall, and have nearly poisoned myself. That would be a small thing if Sholto had not tried to follow my example, only more so, inasmuch as he has tried to swallow a whole tin of the best china blue. Honestly, I thought it was all over with the little chap, and he is now tied up in his crib so that he can't crawl after more! He appears to have a depraved appetite, for he declares he liked it! Of course, Jack says it is all my fault, and calls me a murdering mother! He is a brute!

"No news. Blanche is still here, as beautiful as ever, and longing for you to come back! Oh! and my lovely little Miss Hemier has been very ill—her husband was in despair about her, and has ordered her away to-day (Jack says 'carted' is a very vulgar expression) to get some change of air. I only saw her once. I called the day after you left, but she seemed very weak and languid then, and I had no opportunity of a chat with her, for she could hardly speak, and he was flattering about her all the time, needless to say, in a great state of agitation. How nice it is to be a hotel! One always has so much made of one!

"I don't quite know what her illness is—something of a neuragic order, I think. She looked as though she had awful pain in her head and eyes, poor thing! I am so sorry! I can't see more of her. I have fallen in love with her—she is so exquisitely beautiful! But, there, I must pull up, or I shall make this letter as long as one of the gospels. I hope, Hugo, dear, you are having a festive time. If you see any lovely frocks you can buy them for me. I know I am a middle-aged matron, but what woman ever grew too old for a new frock! Sholto is roaring like a bull of Bashan. I must fly!—Give your loving, devoted sister,

"Gus!"

P.S.—"Don't stay away too long. We can't do without you, dear old thing!"

2nd P.S.—"Bring some bonbons. Blanche is fond of them!"

The smile called up by Lady Gus' effusion was lingering on Lord Taunton's face when his man came in, bearing a telegram in his hand.

The smile gave way to a sudden look of pain, as he opened and read the frantic outcry.

"Come at once. Jack has had a dreadful accident; was thrown from horse, unconscious; does not know me. I am distracted. "Gus."

Preparations were immediately made for a hurried departure, although there was no prospect of crossing the channel till night-time. Hugo felt his heart heavy in his breast as he thought of his sister's trouble.

It seemed such an anomaly, that trouble should come to Gus, bright, happy, sunny Gus—she who had never known suffering or anxiety, save, perhaps, on his account during the whole of her life.

Poor little Gus! In imagination he could see her pretty, piquante face drawn and haggard with sudden grief. His first thought was for her, but the sympathy that filled his heart overflowed as he remembered the cause of this grief. He knew no man whom he esteemed and liked so well as he did Jack Trevelyan.

He had given his sister willingly, gladly, to the fine, manly, honest young fellow, and he had never once had a moment's regret or uneasiness since the first day of their marriage.

His face was full of questioning anxiety as he alighted at last at Westchester station. Even Alwynne and all the miserable dread and suffering that circled about her was forgotten in this moment, as he looked the inquiry his lips could not utter of the groom who had brought the dog-cart to meet him.

"Mr. Trevelyan is still unconscious. He ain't neither spoke nor moved, my lord," the man said quickly; and there was almost a weakness in his voice, and a tear in his eyes, as he spoke, for Jack Trevelyan was beloved by all who knew him, big or small.

Hugo drove to the Abbey in silence. He made no effort to question the man further. He felt something of a vague reproach in his heart as he drove through the now luxuriously leafed park and grounds. Perhaps had he been at home the accident might not have occurred. It was one of those fleeting thoughts that are always the accompaniment of heart-felt sorrow, the natural attendant, as it were, to the regret that harm has come to any dear one.

The very walls and windows and doors seemed to speak a sympathy in the grief that had fallen upon the big house—all was so still. No pews, pignatta, flattering figure at the doorway; no tall, broad form and hearty laugh and voice to welcome him as he alighted; only the grave face of the butler, who spoke the same message as the groom.

As he passed through the hall Hugo saw through an open doorway a tall, white-robed figure. It was Blanche Glenles. He meant to pass on, as he did not think she saw him, but she turned and came to him hurriedly.

"Oh! Lord Taunton!" she said, her voice no longer hard and slow, but changed, and changed with emotion. "I am so glad you have come. Poor little Gus, it is so terrible! She has not shed one tear; I have not known what to do with her. I am so glad you have come!"

Hugo held her hand gently. For the first time he had a feeling of liking for her; she seemed so womanly, so tender—quite another creature to the big, headstrong, lawless, social woman whom Lady Gus had admired so much.

He said some words to her. What they were he hardly knew, for his thoughts were with the sister upstairs, and he was also unconscious that he held her hand in his while he spoke.

Blanche was perfectly conscious of this slight breach of etiquette, but made no effort to remind him of it; and as he loosened her fingers at last and turned away, moving hurriedly up the stairs, a gleam of something like triumph, and most certainly intense satisfaction, came into her big blue eyes.

It certainly was gratifying to feel that, after all, she had not wasted herself in vain in having remained on at the Abbey during his absence.

She was shrewd enough to grasp at once that it was her womanliness and natural sympathy that had won from him this small advance on their most conventional friendship, and as she settled down to continue the pursuit of her novel she determined she would take this mood as the keynote to her future actions, where Lord Taunton was concerned.

Hugo made his way up to the sick room, he stood for a moment contemplating the scene before him till a mist of tears rose before his sight, and blotted it out.

All was so still. In a vague sort of way it struck him as being so strange that it could be so still with Gus in the room—Gus, who was usually surrounded by an atmosphere of bustle and laughter and life!

It was hard to realize that that small, crouched up figure beside the bed could be Gus. He had never thought it possible that grief could work so swift a change.

In that white, set face, with the blue-shaded eyes, the hair pushed back from the brow, he could trace not even the faintest likeness, the sunny, merry, happy sister he knew so well. He went up to her softly, touching her hand, and whispering her name.

She turned with an inarticulate cry, and flung herself into his arms, clinging to him like a little child.

"He will die!" she whispered, hoarsely. "Look—look at him, Hugo. He has never moved, never stirred. I have spoken to him so often—so often, and he does not hear me, and Jack always answered me. I know he will die! They say kind things to try and comfort me, but I know better!"

Hugo held the trembling little form to his heart. Words would not come easily, and the consolation his heart desired to give her seemed so impossible as his eyes went to the bed where lay that still figure—as stiff and silent as a figure hewn of marble.

Lady Gus lifted her anguish-stricken, tearless face to his.

"You will not leave me, Hugo! You will stay with me always now! I—I have no one but you!"

He kissed her cold brow.

"Darling, I will stay with you always!" he answered, the reproach he had before felt coming back fourfold.

What, after all, were his grief and disappointments before such a sorrow as this? And then came another thought, that if Alwynne could know, would not her first tender remembrance be for this poor tortured woman, on whose life's sunshine the shadow had fallen so swiftly, so dreadfully.

It was not the moment to nurse selfish feelings. What though he must live here with the knowledge of Alwynne's presence perpetually beside him? What though his eyes must rest on her lovely form and face, growing so unendurably dearer to him, and fall also on that strange, false other to whom she belonged—what then?

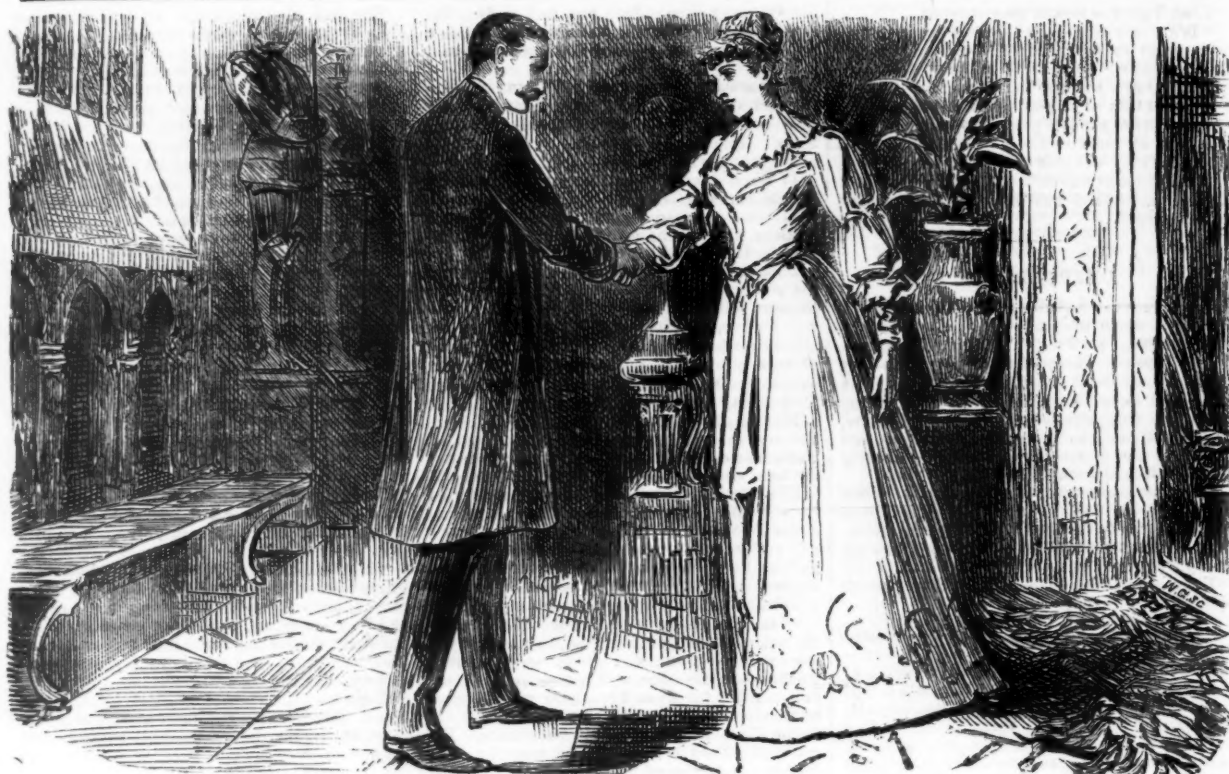
He was not the first who had had to live side by side, as it were, with the open grave, in which hope, love, happiness, were for ever buried.

The power of responsible acting was taken from him now. Even though his whole soul craved to put space between himself and his lost love—human nature, affection, sorrow, sympathy, duty, all—rose before him to hold back.

Temptation might be thrust in his path. His heart faltered, as in quick prevision he foreshadowed the suffering that would and must come to him through Alwynne; but—he must withstand temptation, he must be strong as iron—the weakness and longing in his heart must be crushed under foot, and be forgotten.

His sister looked to him for comfort and help, and in a sort of premonitory way it came to him that Alwynne would look to him as his sister did. He must be true to his honour, to his manhood, and help them both.

Alwynne sat by the window of the lodging.



"OH! LORD TAUNTON!" SAID BLANCHE. "I AM SO GLAD YOU HAVE COME!"

house, and looked out at the sea. The sun was shining on it, and the white crested waves rolled and murmured a sort of joyous song in the sunlight. A book lay on her knee, but she was not reading, she was not even thinking.

Conscious, definite thought was something that never seemed to come to her now. Her mind was in a perpetual haze, in a sort of dream, in which everything was vague and indescribable, save only one feeling, a dominant, overpowering feeling that when something—someone, some strange, invisible influence drew near to her—she must arise and obey its mandates, whatever they might be.

She had grown very thin, and her lovely face was worn and strangely altered, but there was no diminution of her beauty. As one of the most extraordinary writers of the day says:—

"Pain and time, which trace deep lines and write a story on a human face, have a strangely different effect on one face and another. The face that is only fair, even very fair, they mar and flaw; but to the face whose beauty is the harmony between that which speaks from within and the form through which it speaks power is added by all that causes the outer man to bear more deeply the impress of the inner. The pretty woman fades with the roses on her cheeks and the girlhood that lasts an hour; the beautiful woman finds her fulness of bloom only when a past has written itself on her, and her power is then most irresistible when it seems going."

Alwynne's beauty was not material, but of the soul. Despite the dreamy haze that had come into her eyes, clouding as it were, their exquisite intellect, the fragrance of her young soul was breathed throughout her individuality.

She sat looking at the sea, yet seeing it not. The sunshine, the murmur of the waves, the laughter of the children, all were there, but the sense of none of it came to her. She sat

back, her eyes full of soft beauty, with the book open on her knee. Suddenly she aroused, as with the touch of some strong magnetic thrill, and turned her head.

The colour flushed in her face, then died away as her husband came towards her.

"Put on your hat and come out!" he said, and as he spoke he passed his hand softly over her beautiful hair. "The sunshine is lovely! You sit here too much." He laughed softly as she rose with docile obedience. "What a good child you are, Alwynne! You do all I tell you."

She put the book on the table without a word, and went to the door. Just as she reached it he called her back.

"Come and kiss me!" he said, in the same laughing sort of way.

She turned at once, and went up to him, lifting her lovely face to his.

He touched her lips lightly, and then dismissed her.

Left alone, Blair Hunter stood in front of the window and smiled to himself. He appeared to take a deep interest in the marceuvres of some children who were erecting a huge castle of sand.

"Everything comes to him who knows how to wait," he said to himself. "Well, Heaven knows I have waited a good century. Thought at last my luck was buried for ever. The devil takes care of his own. A good, sound, true proverb that, for he has taken pretty good care of me all through my life, bar a few ups and downs."

He left the window, and began pacing to and fro the long, narrow room.

"It works well," he muttered to himself, and there was a look of suppressed excitement in his face. "I can almost see the future. What chance was it that threw Alwynne in my path just at this crisis?" He shrugged his shoulders. "Chance! Why, it was fate—my life itself—my very life!"

He stood silent for a moment, and then

stretched out his large white hand and laughed.

"They shall dance like puppets to the music I choose to play; and, by Heaven, I shall play a big tune. It looked a safe game before—having all the tricks—but this will be safer. Thanks to that boy's information, I can hold his lordship the Earl pretty much as I choose. He won't be able to refuse Alwynne much, and if I fail to extract what I ask from him—well, Alwynne will be more successful."

He leaned against the window still smiling.

"What curious fools so-called good people are!" he mused on, deeply interested in the sand castle beyond. "This wife of mine, for instance—what an extraordinary creature! What quixotic madness! To turn her back on luxury, to cut herself off from the man she loves, and all for what?—a few paltry principles, a sense of honour, which may mean a good deal in sound, but certainly won't put food into one's mouth. Well! it's an ill wind, and I am not going to grumble, since her folly has driven her into my hands. By Gad! but she is a prize worth having to me! I need never despair now. If all my plans should fail—and failure does come, who knows that better than I do?—well, I have a gold mine in the girl properly worked! She wants working, though!" He turned from the window, and his smile went. "She is dazed and overwhelmed just at present—she has not had time to recover; but," he frowned slightly, "she will make an effort to recover, and there will be a struggle," he paused a moment. "Well, let the struggle come! I can meet it, and end it too. I am too strong for them all! I must always win!"

(To be continued.)

THERE are known to be 209 cities in the world with populations of over one hundred thousand persons each.



"I BEG YOUR PARDON!" SAID BETTY, PREPARING TO GO.]

NOVELLETTE.]

THAT TROUBLESOME BETTY.

CHAPTER I.

"It is nearly high time you girls settled!" says Mrs. Grath, a trifle querulously. "Here is Eleanor twenty-five, and you are nineteen next week, Betty!"

"I would not marry the best man in Christendom until I was thirty," remarks Betty, coolly. "I want to have a little time before I venture on matrimony. It must be awful to be compelled to account to a man for all one's goings and comings. In fact, I think single-blessedness is the only blessedness;" and, tossing aside the lace she had been mending, she gives one exhaustive yawn and stands erect, looking down at mother and sister with laughter in her hazel eyes.

"If you wait until you are thirty," remarks Mrs. Grath, sententiously, "you may have to wait the remainder of your life. Good looks and youth go all too quickly."

"Oh, hear her!" cries Betty, delightedly; "and when you have heard her, Eleanor, mark what manner of woman she is. I vow she is younger and prettier than any girl of my acquaintance. It is really too absurd to call her mother. With such a model before us, do you think it likely we shall believe our good looks will leave us early? You are forty-four, my dear, but you certainly have the appearance of thirty-four!"

The mother wears a pleased expression, all the more so because she knows that Betty is speaking the truth. There are a great many folks who declare Eleanor Grath looks nearly as old as her mother; and so, in fact, she does.

"Betty, you are a sad flatterer!" says Mrs. Grath, smiling indulgently. "But I really think I carry my years well. Heigho! I was only seventeen when I married, and Eleanor was born on my eighteenth birthday. I

remember how disappointed I was my first child was not a boy; but your father was well content. To the end he worshipped me; and knowing how delicate his health was, how uncertain his hold on life, he sacrificed all his personal property to purchase me an annuity. You see, if we had lived up to the full extent of our income, at his death we should have been paupers, because the Grath estates are so strictly entailed. And this is the reason I wish to see you settled, girls. We are enjoying now an income of five hundred pounds per annum. When I am gone you will have nothing."

"Don't speak of death, mother dear!" says Eleanor, in her soft voice; but Betty breaks into a little laugh. She objects to sentiment on principle.

"You absurd creature, you'll live to be a very old woman. You are only just beginning life. I declare I often doubt the relationship you are pleased to claim," and catching Mrs. Grath by the waist, she whirls her round the room, frantically.

"Stop! Stop! Betty, you mad thing, be quiet. I really want to talk to you seriously!" pants Mrs. Grath.

"I hate anything serious," but she releases her mother with an amused air.

The little woman stands looking up at her—for Betty is rather tall, and Mrs. Grath only boasts four feet ten in height. She is a very pretty little woman, slender as a girl, with blue, innocent eyes, and a great mass of yellow hair, in which there is not one thread of grey—just the sort of creature to be coaxed and petted, but never to be worried with business matters, or harassed in any way—a little affectionate, kind-hearted woman—a toy, but never a helpmate. This is Mrs. Grath.

"Now, mamma," says Betty, tossing the chestnut curls from her brow. "What is this all-important subject on which you wish to dilate?"

Mrs. Grath blushes, hesitates, and then stammers,—

"Why, my dear, I really think if Eleanor's engagement does not soon end in marriage, she had better give up all thought of Dick Ryder. Africa is so far away, and men so soon forget. He may even now have a wife, although he doesn't care to acknowledge the fact. It is four years since he went away to make his fortune—six since he first asked for Eleanor. Mr. Congreve was saying last night that no man had a right to play the laggard in love, as he has done."

"How dare Mr. Congreve meddle with my affairs?" demands Eleanor, in most unusual passion. "Mother, how could you make him your confidante in such a matter? I will not allow it. I hate the man!"

Mrs. Grath stares at her in a scared fashion.

"I did not think you would mind," she says, tamely. "Oh, dear! how unlucky I am, so often to offend. And Mr. Congreve has been so kind, has helped me in so many ways. Really, I think that you might make your mother's friends yours."

"Friends!" echoes Eleanor, with quiet scorn. "It remains to be proved that Price Congreve is your friend. Perhaps he hopes to be something more!"

"Well!" bridling, "I am not too old to marry again!"

"Not too old, mother dear! But you would not yield my father's place in your heart to one all unworthy of it?" the daughter asks, affectionately, and Mrs. Grath begins to whimper. "Forgive me, if I spoke too sharply, but I was vexed that Dick should be discussed by—that man. Poor Dick, who has had four such cruel years of struggle and privation. Ah, dear, of yourself you never would have hinted he was faithless. You would not have hurt me so cruelly, and you don't believe it."

"No," says the elder lady, tearfully, "I don't believe it now; but sometimes I do. And oh! I am so anxious about your future and Betty's!"

"You can leave Betty to take care of herself," remarked that young lady, gruffly; "and she will be awfully glad when this absurdly sentimental scene closes"—she has fervently wiped away her tears of pity for Eleanor. "And see here, my dear little woman, if Mr. Congreve wants to marry you, he must first get my permission. May he live till he gets it! And," with a sudden burst of temper, "if he dares to say or insinuate anything horrid of Dick, I'll return the compliment with interest! He is a sneak and an adventurer, for all his handsome face and suave manners!"

And here, to her dismay, her mother bursts into a passion of weeping.

"You are cruel and ungrateful girls," she sobs. "You think nothing of all the years I have spent in your service. I have never denied you any wish I had it in my power to grant; and now, when I speak to you for your own good, you revile me and my friends!" and rushing from the room she slams the door behind her.

"Whew!" says Betty, then giving utterance to a sound shamefully like a whistle. "What is to be done now? Shall we go to her?"

"No," answers Eleanor. "She is best alone, and when she comes down we must pretend to have forgotten all about this little explosion."

"If I thought she would marry Mr. Congreve I would go away," announced Betty, with solemnity.

"Oh no, you would not. You would stay to look after her interests. Poor mamma, she is so innocent of guile! But I hope we need not fear such an end to her acquaintance with that man. She is only flattered by his attentions. After all these years she surely would not give us a new father!"

"And such a father! Eleanor, you must not mind what she said about Dick. He is as true as steel, and you are not the sort of woman a man easily forgets. Poor old Dick! how I should like to see his honest, ugly face again—for he is ugly. Even you, Eleanor, can't pretend to think him an Adonis!"

Eleanor laughs.

"Beauty lies not so much in the face beloved as in the lover's eyes," she quotes; "and I am prouder of my Dick than I ever could be of the handsomest man under the sun! I don't care for a barber's model sort of creature, all pink and white, with immaculate curls. I like to feel that, if I am strong, my lover is stronger; that there is nothing weak and offensive about him; that in crowded cities, where stern men meet, he can claim and hold his own."

"Dear me!" says Betty, lifting laughing eyes to the ceiling. "A dissertation, of the genus man, by Miss Grath; admission free, gratis, for nothing!"

"Betty, you are incorrigible. I don't know how to talk to you. But, my dear, when you turn comen (and you can't go through life without love) I prophesy you will be as idiotic as those you most despise. You never do anything by halves. When you give your heart you will give it wholly, irrevocably, generously. Ah! my dear, may Heaven grant the man of your choice may be worthy of you!"

"Great Powers! what a mountain you have made of a mole hill? Oh, if only I had been born a boy I should have been spared all this silly sentiment, all bother of any kind. Well, when I was younger, I declare to you I've cried to think of all the chances of glory I had lost through my unfortunate sex; and I've spent whole hours revelling in fancy on desert islands, or sailing the wide sea king of the pirates!" she lets her white, lisom hands fall upon her lap. "What chances of distinction I have lost!"

"You might have aspired to the chieftaincy of a smuggler's band!"

"Thank you, no. All I did should be above board. I've no fancy for sneaking a cargo to shore in the dark, or dodging revenue officers. I think I should have made a dashing Turpin, or Duval!"

"Where is the difference between smuggler and highwayman?"

"I am not of an argumentative turn of mind," Betty remarks, loftily; "and may I remind you, Miss Grath, it is time we dressed? Mrs. Bowker does not like unpunctual guests;" so with a smile and a nod to Eleanor she goes from the room and up to her own apartment, which is very high up indeed—Mrs. Grath renting chambers on the fringe of society's garment, if one may be allowed such an expression.

As she slowly dresses her face assumes a more thoughtful expression, for the girl is just a little troubled about her mother.

She stands a moment, looking from the tiny window, and very fair she is to see. The white shoulders and arms show very white indeed against the ruddy brown background of tresses which fall below the slender waist. The innocent, youthful face is so bright and eager, the dewy eyes so full of hope, that one quite forgets that the nose is of a nondescript kind, the chin a trifle too square for beauty. Indeed, when Betty smiles, one is apt to forget everything but the flash of white teeth, the sparkle of bewildering eyes, and the play of the pretty dimples in cheeks and chin.

A roguish, happy English girl, not without a reserve of pride and courage, such is Betty Grath; full of young, strong life, and quick, warm emotions.

Her toilet occupies but very little time; but it is most effective, though simple in the extreme. She wears a black net gown, with clusters of crimson and yellow flowers artistically placed about the train and corsage; the latter is quite high to the throat, with a tiny ruff of lace about it, and the sleeves descend to the elbow.

Betty is a modest girl, and cares less than nothing what strictures may be passed upon her appearance so long as she feels "respectable," as she expresses it. Catching up her fan and cloak she runs lightly down to Eleanor's room.

"Are you ready?" she asks, briskly. "Oh, I say, how nice you look! That gray dress suits you so beautifully, for years it's quite the new-like style, awfully fascinating, if it doesn't develop too far. Where is the little mother?"

"I am here," says a voice in the doorway. "Dear me, girls, how quick you have been!" and there is Mrs. Grath arrayed in all her glory, every trace of her recent agitation removed from her smiling, blushing face.

She looks remarkably pretty in a dress of lilac muslin; but Betty frowns as she walks through the hall.

"Why will she wear such décolleté gowns?" she thinks to herself, and at the door she pauses.

"Pray draw your cloak closer, mamma. It is a chilly night, and your neck is so exposed."

Betty has such an unpleasant way of speaking her mind, and the mother stands just a little in awe of her; so she says, deprecatingly,—

"Marsden has not made it quite to order, dear; I must remonstrate with her."

"I hope you will; it isn't really for modest women to appear in such a fashion!" and then she subsides into silence, sorry that she has said anything to spoil her mother's pleasure, but glad that she has dared to speak the truth.

Mrs. Bowker meets them with outwretched hands, and whispers a few words to the blushing, half-smiling, half apprehensive widow. Then a tall, dark man of distinguished appearance comes up.

"Miss Grath, I am delighted! I hardly expected to meet you here! How charming you look! Miss Grath! Miss Betty; you should have an older chaperone. Really your mother does not look the character!"

"No, does she?" breaks in that awful Betty, and "she has kept her innocence with her innocent looks. Really any well might pounce on this little lamb!"

His eyes meet here—here go bright and aggressive—and then he slowly smiles.

"Hed you any particular wolf in your mind when you made that appeal, Miss Betty?"

"Oh, no," the widow says, quickly; "and really if you pay attention to all that Betty says your days will be fully occupied. You must not heed my silly little girl's nonsense."

He bends his dark head, and whispers a few words she alone can hear; but she blushes as brightly as any maiden, and Betty remarks quite audibly to Eleanor,—

"I shall kill him! I know I shall; and— and as for mamma, I am ashamed of her!"

"Oh, Betty!"

CHAPTER II.

A young lady has begun to sing. She has a notion that the world has lost a prima donna in her. As a matter of fact, she has a good voice of enormous power, but terribly harsh, and Betty, watching her opportunity, effects an escape to a quiet little stove considerably removed from the drawing-room.

Here the voice comes to her softened by the distance, and with a thankful sigh Betty enters the bower of ferns and flowers. It is so dim that she has reached the one seat it boasts before she sees it is already occupied.

"I beg your pardon," she says, preparing to go, but the one occupant rises with a grave bow.

"Do not let me drive you away. If you would rather I should go I will. It is very hot in the rooms."

"I don't mind the heat; in fact, I like it," Betty answers, trying to see what manner of man her companion is, and failing because of the dim light; "but—but—oh! I know I should make no disparaging remarks, but that girl's voice is too awful!"

"I am glad I am not the only sufferer," answers the man, with a low, amused laugh. "I felt if I remained longer I should fall on my nearest neighbour and stay there so lame away. Does Mrs. Bowker torture her guests often in this fashion?"

"I don't know. I hope not; but it is rarely we visit here. In fact, we don't go out very much."

"And you would like to?"

"To concerts and theatres, yes; but I don't care for this kind of thing, it is so prosy. I can't invent small talk. I hate it; don't you?"

"Indeed, I do; but unfortunately I don't often meet a kindred soul. I only drifted here to-night through some unhappy accident."

"I wish Mrs. Bowker could hear you!" says Betty, with a happy laugh (and is feeling so well pleased with her new friend). "I should like to see the rowl with which she would favour you. She is a trifle tartish, you know. At least, you may not be very well acquainted with her?"

"I am her cousin," comes the quiet answer, but the voice has a ripple of amusement in it. "Allow me to introduce myself in that character!"

Poor Betty collapses. If only she could get up and run away! Oh! why don't not this dreadful man help her out of her dilemma? At last she says, in the meekest of voices,—

"Of course you will repeat all my silly chatter to her; and she will tell mamma? Oh, dear! why did you lead me on to talk so confidentially?"

He leans forward just at the proper angle to see her face clearly—she is fair, innocent, confided in; with his troubled, self-reproachful eyes.

"I shall say nothing. Your sentiments are only a faint echo of my own. It isn't good form to go with one's hostess; but there is no woman on earth who interests me so quickly as my worthy cousin. When I left the club with Bowker I had no idea that she was bringing me to one of this wife's select entertainments. I almost undertook she was out, and

when I learned the truth it was too late to draw back."

"I am glad you will not repeat my words," says Betty, gratefully. "It would be so unpleasant for us all; and I don't like to hurt other folk's feelings, although I often say awkward things!"

"In just, I suppose? Well, for my own part, I like a little bitter with the sweet, and I would not give a fig for a tame woman, who had neither mind nor opinion of her own. She would so quickly fall on one!"

"Why, I have always heard men hate women with opinions. Mamma says that is the reason I don't get on with them."

"Then you have opinions?" amusedly.

"Very pronounced ones!" nodding her head, sagely. "I am bold enough to believe that men have not all the brains or all the common sense. I actually hold that they have not the monopoly of the virtues."

He laughs outright, such a hearty, healthy laugh that Betty cannot but join it, even if it is against herself.

"I am not sorry I came now," says her companion, in his peculiarly clear, low tones; "in fact, I am glad. You are a new study!"

Betty rises hastily.

"Oh! I won't have my character dissected by a stranger. I—I am afraid I have been very inconvenient. All I can do now to repair my error is to go back at once to mamma!"

"Let me go with you; and you need not fear my verdict upon you would be uncharitable. I hope that girl has stopped singing!"

Together they leave the alcove, and once in the full light he turns to look at her, and with one quick glance has become acquainted with every detail of her dress, every line of the expressive face, and is apparently favourably impressed.

To the girl he is another being than the man who is in the habit of meeting. He is below rather than above the medium height; but his presence is so good, and his figure so well knit, one is apt to credit him with more inches than he has.

For the rest he is dark and rather sallow, his eyes keen, and intensely brown. The mouth, just visible beneath the moustache, is very firm; under certain circumstances it might grow cruel, and there is such a look of intellectual power about the man that quite involuntarily one accords him deference.

"That is mother," says Betty, with a glance towards the corner where Mrs. Grath is seated. "I must join her at once. Thank you for your escort!" and before he can say anything in reply she has hurried from him and joined the widow, who flashes unconsciously at her eyes meet Betty's; but she moves her skirts to make room for her between herself and Mr. Congreve.

"What have you been doing with yourself; you look so bright? And where have you been hiding so long?" she asks. "I have missed you!"

"I got away from the singings as soon as I could, and found a place of retreat."

"And a pleasant companion?" inquires Price Congreve, significantly.

"A very pleasant one! I would advise a few of his sex to model themselves after him!" Betty answers, with flaming cheeks.

"Who is this Admirable Crichton?" questions Mrs. Grath, laughingly.

"I really don't know. We were not introduced; and, of course, I could not ask his name," Betty says recklessly.

"My dear child! You should have some consideration for the prophecies."

"Oh, I am quite above them, and really I cannot see in what I erred. Mother, aren't we soon going home? This is abominably slow!"

"Missing the pleasant companion, I suppose," draws Congreve; but Betty declines to answer; and, noting that the girl is growing restive, Mrs. Grath slowly and reluctantly rises.

"Betty is not used to society hours yet; she is so young—but that is a fault which will mend with every passing day. Good-night, Mr. Congreve."

He bends over her, saying a few words in a low voice, and the girl is angry to see her mother's eyes drop before his, and the pretty face flush with unconcealed pleasure.

"I hate that man!" she says, before they are out of hearing, and Congreve smiles unpleasantly. "My day will come," is what he thinks, but Betty does not give a thought to the future, as she seats herself beside Eleanor in the hired fly.

"Really," begins the pretty widow, "really, Betty, you have behaved abominably throughout the whole evening. If you cannot conduct yourself with greater propriety you must remain at home. First, you hide yourself away from everyone; then you appear in company with a man you do not know; lastly, you grossly insult my friends."

"At all events," the girl retorts, half-sulkily, "I did not allow any man to compromise me by his attentions!"

Mrs. Grath begins to cry, and, as usual, Eleanor comes to the rescue. She is essentially the peacemaker; and now she adroitly turns the conversation into other channels; so that, when home is reached, Mrs. Grath is in her usual state of beaming content. Betty is first to go upstairs, and Eleanor is considerably surprised, when she reaches her room, to find the girl waiting for her.

"I'm not in the least tired," she says, "and I feel so wretched I cannot rest! Oh, Nell, dear old Nell, I am quite sure mother is going to make a wreck of her life!"

"No, no!" cries Eleanor, turning pale, "do not think it—do not believe it! Poor little mother! If only she were as wise as she is kind!"

"But she isn't!" interrupts Betty, "and Price Congreve knows her weakest points. She is completely fascinated by him. She believes she loves him—even I who hate him cannot help confessing he is very handsome—and one day she will leave us Mrs. Grath to return Mrs. Congreve!"

"No, no! She would never hide such an important step from us."

"As you like, Eleanor; a prophet is not without honour save in his own country, and I can see through a brick wall (if there's a hole in it) as quickly as most people. But you don't see with my eyes, so the catastrophe when it occurs will be all the more startling to you. I shall manifest no surprise!"

Eleanor comes to her sister's side with a very troubled face.

"I wish you would not say such things, dear! I cannot think that, after years of fidelity to father's memory, mother would marry a man of whom she knows literally nothing. Oh! if only Dick were rich enough to send for us, as he used to dream of doing!"

"Mother wouldn't go; she is afraid of crossing the sea, and she would not lose her lover. Poor little mother! poor little mother!" and there is infinite pity and tenderness in the girl's sweet voice. "Well, if the worst comes, you have Dick to comfort you; and you would not mind roughing it for his sake; and I, being free, shall watch over the matter, and be always at hand to help her."

"But one day you will marry!"

"Oh, no! I am not a favourite with the sterner sex; I am too fond of my own way, my own ideas! Why, I actually overheard Mr. Bowker's brother say to a friend, 'Betty Grath is a good-looking girl, but she is too confoundedly cheeky!' " (the last word in a whisper), and then she laughs. "One day I shall repeat his words to him. Oh, gracious! how I shall frighten him!"

The door slowly opens, and Mrs. Grath's blonde head appears.

"I heard voices," she says, "and came to warn you; it is already two o'clock. Betty, you naughty girl, you have lost your beauty sleep. Run off to bed at once!"

"To hear is to obey; but what a pity you

came on the scene just now! I was just regaling Eleanor with the story of my latest conquest. Mother, would you seriously object to Augustine Bowker as a son-in-law? He has no vicious habits, does not smoke, abjures clubs; and, in fact, poses as that very nice man we meet in trains, and nowhere else!"

"Betty, I never know when you are in earnest. Is it true Mr. Bowker has proposed for your hand? The match would be an excellent one!" But the girl has run lightly from the room, leaving Eleanor to explain matters to her mother.

The little widow is certainly an affectionate and anxious parent, and, with the morning, her first thoughts revert to her girls.

"They will be so tired after their unusual dissipation," she says. "They shall have breakfast in their own rooms!"

So she sits here in solitary state, dawdling over her letters. There is one from Price Congreve, praying her to grant him an interview on the following day. She blushes, sighs, hesitates, and we all know that the woman who hesitates is lost.

The last of the pile is from a very old school friend living in Essex. She begs that the girls may come to her for a month. "The country air will do them a world of good, and I should be glad to know them. I have no children of my own. I would be glad, too, if I could prevail on you to join them, but I know from old experience that you cannot be happy save in town. I will meet your girls myself, and, when their visit ends, will myself bring them back to you."

When the sisters at last appear she hands the letter to Eleanor, bidding her read it aloud, and positively watching her face as she does so.

"She is very kind," begins Miss Grath, "but I think we are best at home!"

"I shall not leave you, mother!" breaks in Betty. "I should like to hear how you would get on without us?"

"You silly child, I shall do very nicely, and Mrs. Bowker is always pleased to have me there. I should like you to start for Torkerton in two days!"

"Unless you command me to go I shall remain here!" says Betty, stoutly.

"Then I do command. It will best for you in every way!"

"There is nothing left for me but obedience," the girl answers sally, "but remember, I go unwillingly. I am quite sure that harm in some way will come of our visit. I wish Mrs. Huntley had been at the bottom of the sea before she remembered our existence!"

"Mother, you will be lonely!" pleads Eleanor, but the little woman answers—

"I have plenty of friends, who will not let me feel my loneliness!"

So it happens that two days later the sisters travel to Torkerton, leaving Mrs. Grath behind them. As parting, Betsy clings to her mother.

"Dear, don't do anything rash. When we come back let us find you as you are now. I could not bear to see you changed!"

"I shall not change!" but something in the sweet treble voice makes Betty all at once, and the sisters make their journey almost in absolute silence. They are met at Torkerton by Mrs. Huntley, a comely woman of fifty, with keen grey eyes and a fresh colour. She gives them the heartiest of welcomes, and is so kindly, so motherly, that for a while even Betty forgets her fears.

CHAPTER III.

THREE weeks pass quickly with the girls. Torkerton farm is a model one, and nothing can exceed the kindness with which both host and hostess treat their guests.

Betty, as usual, is prime favourite, but Eleanor feels no jealousy. She is used to seeing her sister preferred to herself and takes it quite as a matter of course. Then, too, she so

truly and warmly loves her that she is proud of her conquests.

"It must be lovely here in the summer!" says Betty one day. "I wish mother would take a nice little house down here instead of keeping those horrid, dingy apartments. I hate London, and I don't care a brass button for society."

"Perhaps, young lady, you would sing another song if you were compelled to remain year in and year out. How would you like to spend a wet winter here?" asks Mr. Huntley, pinching her ear.

"Oh, I could find plenty of work. I should learn to make butter, cure hams, and all that sort of thing. Oh, yes; because my hands are white and smooth you think I am fit for nothing but play!"

"Letters for you, miss," announces a trim maid, and Eleanor eagerly receives them. One is from her mother, but the postmark puzzles her.

"Burnham! Betty, who does mother know at Burnham?"

"How should I know. Open the letter and we shall soon hear," and Eleanor obeying begins to read. Suddenly her face whitens and her hands tremble so they can scarcely hold the dainty perfumed paper.

"Give it me," says Betty, in a hoarse voice, "there is something wrong," and, snatching it from her sister, she runs her eyes quickly over the few lines.

"MY DARLING GIRLS.—"

"You will be surprised to learn I am staying at Burnham. I arrived here yesterday, and intend to stay a week unless something occurs to spoil our plans. (Our plans! interpolates Betty) Yes, dears, I know you will be surprised, and I am afraid a little angry, when I tell you I have changed my condition. We were married two days since—Mr. Congreve and I. It seemed wiser to get the ceremony over before your return, and to save all bother. Your new father wishes me to say that nothing is to be changed, save that you will have a father's care as well as a mother's love, and I hope that you both will prove dutiful daughters. On Wednesday next we return to the old apartments; on Thursday you will join us. I am writing Mrs. Huntley by this post—With fondest love from myself and husband, I remain, your loving mother,

"MINNIE CONGREGRE."

With a tragic gesture Betty casts the letter down and rushes from the room. Eleanor, full of fear of what she may do in her passion, would follow, but Mrs. Huntley restrains her. "She is best alone," she says. "My poor girls, this is a bitter blow to you!"

"Oh," breaks in Mr. Huntley, "it may all prove for the best. What sort of fellow is this new father, Eleanor?"

"He is not a good man, I am sure," she answers, distressfully. "I cannot tell you why Betty and I so dislike and distrust him, unless it is by instinct. But he is very handsome, and can be pleasant too. He has completely fascinated mamma. Oh! poor mamma, she is so easily deceived," and burying her face in her hands she weeps quietly, but none the less bitterly; whilst Mrs. Huntley tries vainly for very long to comfort her. At last she lifts her head. "Forgive me, I have been a great trouble to you, but the shock was so cruel that I seemed to lose my balance all at once. I will not vex you with my tears again, but I must ask for your advice, although I am afraid if it does not agree with Betty's wishes she will not act upon it."

"My dear girl," says the farmer, before his wife can reply, "there is nothing left you but to be reasonable. Your mother is a pretty woman, and it is quite natural she should marry again. Let us hope her choice has been a wise one (we all give the bridegroom the benefit of the doubt until we have proved him). Take my advice. Write a dutiful note to your mother, saying all the pretty things

the occasion demands, and at the time appointed join her in a friendly fashion. To use a convenient vulgarism, it is of no use to 'cut off your nose to spite your face,' and if you prove unamenable to reason, you cannot fail to make matters hard for your mother."

"It goes against the grain," Eleanor says, dolefully, "but I know that your advice is good, and I will try to act upon it," and then Mrs. Huntley kisses her, pats her shoulder affectionately, and bids her go to Betty.

"She will have exhausted her grief now, and will be ready to listen to you."

Eleanor is rather doubtful, but she goes up to her sister's room with a heavy heart. Thrice she knocks before the door is opened to her, and Betty, standing slim and straight with white face, and flashing eyes, demands what she wants.

"Let me come in, dear! I want to talk to you about—about this unhappy affair," and her voice quivers ominously.

"All the talking in the world won't undo it. Let it alone!" says Betty, in a hard voice, but she allows Eleanor to enter. "What are you going to do?"

"What is there for us to do but accept the inevitable with the best grace we can? Oh! Betty, don't look so strange; you frighten me. If only you would cry it wouldn't seem so hard to bear."

"Let those find relief in tears who can. Mine do not come easily, and—I would not cry now if I could. Oh! if only I could punish Price Congreve as he deserves I should be content!"

"That would only hurt mother, and we may be mistaken in our estimate of him."

"But we are not. He is an adventurer and a rascal; he will break mother's heart, and ruin our happiness. I felt when we came away that something dreadful would happen; but the quiet life here, and the kindness we received, made me forget my fears. Oh! why did I not defy all authority, and stay at home with mother?"

"She would still have found means to marry without your knowledge. Dear Betty, shall I tell you what our friends advise, and what I feel is best for us to do?"

"Oh, yes, you can tell me if you choose," and Eleanor proceeds to do so; but when she begs Betty to join with her in writing a note of congratulation the girl flashes passionately upon her. Her hazel eyes are almost black with rage and scorn.

"You may please yourself, Eleanor, but I never will congratulate mother upon her certain misery! Oh, you need not look so scared! I shall go back with you, and shall remain at home until my respected stepfather thrusts me out into the world. You are easily frightened; I am not, and mother will want a protector soon. There, say no more on the subject. I won't listen to you."

This is the attitude she assumes through all the following dreary week; Mr. Huntley stares often, and with wide eyes, at her. Can this be Betty Grath, this girl with the white face and sombre expression, with lips set in a hard line, and eyes dark with impotent anger?

He is almost relieved when she goes, though, in truth, he is very fond of the girl.

"There'll be mischief," he says to his wife, and she answers, sadly,—

"I'm afraid there will; Betty is not a docile character."

No one meets them at Finsbury park; and, contrary to previous arrangement, Mrs. Huntley does not accompany them, feeling perhaps she would be just a little bit *de trop*—afraid, too, lest Betty should make a scene. The girl preserves her quiet, stony manner throughout; and even when her mother comes timidly forward to meet them, she suffers no change.

"You are not angry, Betty?" the little woman says. "And he is so good to me!"

"You had a perfect right to please yourself," she answers, coldly, for her heart is very sore; but her eyes flash dangerously

when she sees Eleanor submit to Mr. Congreve's kiss, and her face grows a little whiter. With a smile that has an element of triumph in it he tenders his hand to her, and would repeat his very paternal salute, but she draws quickly back.

"Thank you, no! Our relationship is not close enough to warrant such a familiarity. Mamma, am I to have my old room? Thank you," and she goes slowly upstairs, Price Congreve looking frowningly after her.

"Do not mind her," whispers his wife. "She is tired, and a trifle vexed with us for our secrecy, and you know she has been spoiled from her birth."

He smiles down at her.

"I shall not forget, Minnie. Your lightest wish is law to me; and I am quite prepared to be very fond of Betty if she will let me; but, despite his fair words, his heart is very bitter against the girl.

It must be confessed that in the days immediately following Betty is not a pleasant companion, and she never relaxes her watchfulness of her stepfather. She ascertains quickly he has no occupation of any kind; she doubts if he has any assured income, having seen her mother supply him with money once or twice. But she says nothing; there is no one in whom she could confide. Eleanor has in part gone over to the enemy—that is, seeing Congreve's apparent devotion to her mother, she is learning to think that all along they have misjudged him. He is very kind to her, very forbearing with Betty, who treats him with icy disdain.

Between Mrs. Congreve and her youngest daughter there has risen a great barrier of constraint, which one cannot, the other will not seek to break down. Yet all the while the child's heart yearns for the old loving intercourse, and aches intolerably as she sees this man she so distrusts preferred to herself in all things—for Mrs. Congreve simply adores her husband, and ministers to his wants as though he were the Grand Sultan, and she his slave, and this submissive devotion angers Betty the more.

In early May a letter comes from Dick Ryder, then stationed at Natal—a letter full of hope and love, concluding with an earnest entreaty that Eleanor will go out to him by the next mail; an old friend and his wife who are returning to Natal after a brief holiday will take all care of her, and they will be married as soon after her arrival as possible. He is prospering now beyond his wildest dreams. It has all been a sudden stroke of luck, and what grand luck it is that gives him his sweetheart after all this weary waiting!

"How shall I go and leave you unhappy, Betty?" questions Eleanor, tearfully. "Oh, if I could take you with me!"

"My place is here, with mamma! One day she may want me, though she does not now—and you will be too far away to give help if help is need."

"Oh, Betty, if only you would disabuse your mind of such suspicions! If only you would be less bitter."

"Hush! all the talking in the world won't change me; let us speak of your wedding. I should so like to see you converted into Mrs. Ryder, to wish you happiness at the altar, and be the first to kiss you. Yes, I vow I would cheat Dick out of his prerogative. But that is not to be, and so let us turn our attention to your outfit."

"Oh, Betty, will he be disappointed when he sees me? It is so long since we parted, and I have grown older and graver."

"And dearer to him than ever. And if you are older, why, so is Dick!"

Mr. Congreve says all that is kind and appropriate to Eleanor, even offers suggestions concerning her outfit, and forwards her going in every way, until Betty says savagely to herself,—

"He is glad to be rid of one of us; but he will not find it an easy matter to shake me off. I'll be an old man of the sea to him."

never for a single moment is her distrust of him shaken.

It is a heavy day for her when she bids good-bye to Eleanor. As the latter clings weeping to her, it seems she is losing her last friend, and the bitter sense of loneliness oppressing her is almost more than she can bear. But she sheds no tear, she makes no moan.

"I can't cry!" she says, in a choked voice. "I wish I could, because I should the sooner forget. But you know, Eleanor, that I love you—love you—love you, with every heart-beat. Heaven bless you, darling, keep you happy, and grant that your love for me may never grow less!"

"Oh, Betty! I feel I ought not to go; you will be so lonely. It is selfish to leave you just to seek my own happiness."

"And to make Dick's," gently. "He has the first claim upon your heart and thoughts. There, let me go. You will be braver then, Good-bye. Oh, my dear, good-bye! See, here is mamma waiting for the last word."

"Mother, oh, mother! if we never meet again, remember I always held you dear!" and the little woman weeping quietly says that "partings are so sad, but travelling is swift nowadays, and no doubt Dick will soon bring her back again. And Eleanor feels, with a jealous little pang, *Pris* Congreve will console her mother for her loss. And she carries away with her the memory of Betty's stony face and tearless eyes, to haunt her many a day.

CHAPTER IV.

It was very dull for Betty, when Eleanor was gone. Mrs. Congreve had ceased to invite her to join in her pleasures, and a new set the girl did not know began to frequent the pretty apartments.

Choice dinners were given, expensive excursions undertaken, and, although nothing was told her, Betty knew that money was being spent like water. She kept mostly to her own room; but sometimes, when by chance the newly-wedded pair were alone, she would join them, although she hated doing so, because *Pris* Congreve had cast aside all shadow of deference to her, and her mother saw things only through his eyes.

Just now, when the glamour of her new wife-hood was upon her, she seemed to have but small love for Betty. In fact, she regarded her as a very unruly and troublesome girl. Many a time she wished herself away, and but that it seemed her duty to stand by her mother, she would certainly have gone.

Things went on in this fashion until July, when the Congreves spoke of leaving town; but not a word was said as to Betty's sharing their holiday, and she wondered what she should do, if left to her own devices.

One night, when the apartments are full of guests, she steals downstairs in search of a book. The room is in semi-darkness, and entering it she has secured the volume, and is about to return to her own chamber, when two men enter through the folding-doors. Betty cannot see their faces, but she catches a glimpse of the room beyond, with its little crowd of men, who do not look quite gentlemen, and the laughing, babbling women with their indelicate dresses. Are these her mother's friends? Is that her mother, that little, smiling woman in a lavender gown, which displays so liberally the white, plump shoulders, and pretty arms!

A sick sense of shame oppresses her, and as she moves noiselessly towards the opposite door one man says in a low, but perfectly clear voice,—

"Lots of pretty women here! At least, they look pretty. But then fine feathers make fine birds!"

"Yes, but there are precious few feathers; and what a fool little Congreve is making of herself. When her money is gone, what on earth does she think of doing? I know, for a

fact, Congreve has nothing of his own. He lives by his wits, and then he is six or seven years his wife's junior."

Poor Betty! standing there in the shadows! Cannot you imagine all she is suffering.

"If I were a man," she says, to herself again and again. "Oh, if I were a man, I would make them eat their words about mother!"

Wholly unconscious of what she is doing, she still stands listening, and the second man says,—

"Where's the ex-widow's youngest girl? No one ever sees her now. She was rather pretty, they say!"

"She was awfully chic; not a bit like her frolicsome mother or staid sister. I wonder Congreve did not go for her!"

"Pooh! the girls have got nothing. The mother has only an annuity. When Congreve has raised as much as he can upon it I'll bet he cuts the matrimonial yoke, and flies to fresh fields and pastures new."

And then, with a sudden sense of calamity upon her, Betty contrives to tear herself away, and to go so quietly that the two men hear nothing, see nothing.

That her mother should be so lightly spoken of. On the pain, and the shame of it will kill her. She can scarcely breathe in the tainted atmosphere of this house. What shall she, what can she do?

It is useless to speak to Mrs. Congreve, to tell her all that she has overheard. She would not be believed. No, she must bear all in silence, hoping for the good to come which seemed so far away.

For days her mother has held very much aloof from her, and when by rare chance they find themselves *tête à tête* Mrs. Congreve has been constrained and nervous in her manner. Consequently, Betty is not a little surprised the next morning to receive a message from her, requesting her to come to the breakfast-room at once. She loses no time in obeying, but it certainly annoys her very greatly to find *Pris* Congreve with her mother.

"You wanted me, mamma?" she says, quietly.

"Sit down, if you please," Congreve answers for his wife. "We have rather an important matter under decision, and as it concerns you only, I beg your undivided attention."

"I prefer to stand."

"As you will. From the communications your mother has made to me, and from my own observations, I am well aware that you are altogether discontented with your present life. We have honestly tried to do our duty by you, but you persist in regarding us as your enemies, and doing all in your power to render your mother unhappy. For her sake I should be glad if you would find a home elsewhere."

"Is it your wish I should go, mother?" the girl asks in a low, strange voice.

"Oh, Betty! you know that I love you! But—but why are you so difficult to deal with? Why won't you try and be more like our dear Eleanor?"

"You shall not excite yourself," says Congreve, laying his hands affectionately on the little woman's shoulders. "For my sake be calm!"

"I will, I will. But oh! if Betty had been a good girl, how happy we should have been! Yes, child, I think it better you should leave home for awhile."

"You are that man's mouthpiece!" Betty says, pointing a scornful finger at Congreve. "You never in your life before did or said an unkind thing. Oh, I do not misjudge you, mother! I am not angry with you; but as you wish it, I will go away."

"I am sure, if you are only reasonable, dear, Mr. Congreve will allow you to stay," begins the poor, weak woman; but the warning touch of those strong, white hands upon her shoulders effectually stays her words.

"I do not wish to stay where I am only an intruder!" Betty says loftily, though, indeed, her anguish almost chokes all utterance;

"and, until I can find work, I am sure Mrs. Huntley will take me in!"

"There is no occasion for you to apply to Mrs. Huntley. My wife has already secured the post of companion and secretary for you."

"Oh! this is not the outcome of passion! You have been maturing your plans all along! Mother, how could you do it? To whom am I engaged?"

"To Mrs. Fyson. And, Betty dear, we shall not be far apart; only a matter of half-an-hour's drive—that is when I return to town. The salary is good—thirty-five pounds a-year—and as you don't seem likely to marry, it is best you should begin to earn your own bread. I have nothing to leave you, and I have no doubt the quiet life will suit you."

"Mrs. Fyson is a valetudinarian, is she not?" the girl asks in coldly.

"She is a sad invalid, my dear."

"And it will be part of my duty to humour her caprices? When do I go?"

"On Friday," says Congreve. "This is Tuesday. You have two whole days for preparation. I hope that your new life may prove pleasanter than the old. If you would like me to escort you to Providence Villa I shall be glad to do so."

"Thank you, I am not incapable of caring for myself. May I go to my room now? I have a great deal of work to do."

"And Betty—oh, Betty! don't leave your mother in anger!"

"I am not angry, mamma—at least, not angry with you," and bearing herself calmly to the last, she goes out and up to her own room.

What a pale, changed Betty it is that stands before the open window! It seems to the girl her heart must break, with its load of pain and desolation.

A few months ago she had been so happy, so happy! and now! Well, now her own mother wished her absence. She was to be an outcast from the home her own father's loving thoughts had prepared for them.

"I cannot bear it! I cannot bear it!" she says, under her breath, and flings her arms wide upon the empty air. "No one loves me, no one needs me! Oh, Heaven! in mercy take me home!"

Ah! but she is young and strong, and sorrow rarely kills. So she works indefatigably through the two days left to her, and long before they are over has completed all her arrangements, so that on the third day she has nothing left to do.

Dressing herself with care, she goes down, only to be met by a maid.

"If you please, miss," she says, "Mrs. Congreve said I was to give you this, as she was obliged to go out."

The girl's white face grew hard, and her eyes are dark with pain as she takes the note.

"Her mother out! At such a time! Must she go without farewell?" For a moment an insane desire possesses her to shriek aloud; but Betty has a will of her own, and so conquers that momentary weakness.

All she says is, "Thank you, Susan; you may go," and then she reads the brief, self-exonating lines.

"Dear, Mr. Congreve thinks it best we should part in this way. He is afraid that my health and happiness alike may suffer through any scene between us, so I say good-bye now. I shall not return until I know you have started for Providence Villa. I hope you will be very happy, and that you will soon come to visit us. For your own sake, darling Betty, try to conquer your prejudices; and although my conduct may seem strange, remember I am acting for your good, and that I am always your loving mother."

Mechanically Betty folds the note, leaving it upon the table.

"A mother's tender care!" she says bitterly. "I have no mother now! I am all alone!"

And then, still quietly, still without a tear or a sigh, she gathers together her belongings,

and bids a silent farewell to the house that has sheltered her since her father died.

"She knows perfectly well to what life she is going. She will be secretary, maid, companion—everything, in fact, to a disagreeable woman, whose whole thoughts are engrossed by her own imaginary sufferings, her own peculiar and unobtainable religion. But she does not waver."

"I would die rather than return to his roof!" she says, with the vehemence of youth. "He has stolen my heart a love from me, and I never will forgive him!"

On the second morning after her arrival at the villa (which by the way, is but little removed from Twickenham) she is going upstairs, when she sees a man descending, and remembers that a maid had told her Dr. Wharton was with her mistress. She steps aside to let him pass; and then, as her eyes meet his, gives a quick little cry of surprise, which is echoed by him. It is the stranger of Mrs. Bowker's party. She has never dared to ask his name or from whence he hailed. "A very pleasant smile brightens his face as he joins her."

"This is indeed an unexpected rencontre!" he says, offering his hand. "I have often wondered if we should ever meet again, and I had not the faintest idea that you were related to Mrs. Fyson. I wonder I have not met you here before?"

"I am not a relative," Betty says, bravely, "but a hired servant. I am only Mrs. Fyson's companion. I came here yesterday."

"A genuine sympathy is in his voice as he says—"

"You have had trouble since we met!" and his eyes rest pitifully on her plain, black gown. She is quick to read his thoughts, and says hurriedly—

"Not trouble of that kind, but my only sister is gone to Africa, and my mother has married again. Mr. Congreve and I do not agree very well, and so I left home!"

"Congreve! the name is familiar to me. Oh, I know now! You are Miss Grath! I remember hearing of your mother's second marriage from Miss Bowker." Then as his eyes rest on the pale, small face, so changed, so saddened since he saw it last, he says, kindly, "You are not well; you have been worrying a great deal lately, and Mrs. Fyson is not a cheerful companion. Now, remember, you are not to be frightened by her frequent swoons and hysterics. They are altogether false, neither are you to allow her to dominate over your every action. She is as well and strong as you, though you could not make her believe so, and if she is especially trying refer her to me. I should like to know you regard me as a friend!"

"You are very good!" says Betty, shamefacedly, a most unaccountable shyness possessing her. "But I must not encroach upon your kindness. I must learn to fight my own battles, Doctor—"

"I am Hector Wharton, very much at your service, and as confidence begets confidence you will perhaps tell me my new friend's name is full?"

"It is very ugly—Betty Grath—it couldn't well be uglier. Oh, there is Mrs. Fyson's bell, and you will please excuse me now!"

"Certainly, but I shall see you to-morrow. I am going to prescribe for you as well as our invalid upstairs. Good-bye, Miss Betty!" and with her heart beating faster than ever in all her life it has done before, the girl runs upstairs.

"How kind he is!" she thinks. "How lucky I am to find such a friend!" and the world is all the brighter to her for that chance meeting.

CHAPTER V.

"Mrs. BARRY, you have neglected my instructions. You have not been outside the house for two whole days!"

"I have been very busy," Dr. Wharton, and I am not my own mistress."

"Get your hat and what wraps you require. I am going into the village. You can walk with me, and I'll explain to Mrs. Fyson. I rule her in my turn as she rules others. She won't dispute my authority."

He is very masterful, and Betty has not lost all her mischievous propensities; so with a little defiant, upward look she says—

"But I am not Mrs. Fyson, and I decline to obey orders."

A faint, amused smile plays about his mouth.

"I do not understand the art of entreaty. I should not apply it to you if I did; it would only foster your natural obstinacy. Miss Betty, I am waiting!"

"Well?"

"I shall give you just five minutes to dress."

"But I am not going. I prefer staying at home!"

"This is utter nonsense!" says Hector, seating himself resignedly, "and an awful waste of time. See here, I will let you off on condition that you tell me honestly the reason of your refusal. Is it because you dislike me, or ashamed to be seen in my society?"

A hot flush mounts Betty's face.

"Of course it is not that, Dr. Wharton."

"I believe it is. I can't see any other possible objection to the walk; and, Miss Betty, you may rest assured that I shall not press my attentions upon you." He takes his hat and seems as if about to go, and Betty, sorry and ashamed, hesitates a moment; then says, quickly—

"Don't draw such hasty conclusions. I—I will go, if you please!"

"Not unless you are quite willing," he answers, bending dark, amused eyes on the downcast, blushing face. "Are you?"

"Yes," very meekly, and she goes away to make ready, just a wee bit angry with herself that she has yielded to him; for Betty prides herself on her consistency, and why should she wish to please this man, who is all but a stranger to her? Why should he have that strange, mysterious power over her will?

Once out on the road Dr. Wharton turns to her.

"Isn't this better than staying at home reading a waddy novel to Mrs. Fyson, or tending her imaginary ailments? Why on earth were you so ridiculous about the matter?"

"Dr. Wharton, you are not very polite," in an offended tone.

"No!" coolly. "I pretend to nothing but truthfulness; and I am afraid, Miss Betty, you have a very bad temper, are ready to fire up with or without occasion. Then you are wilful, too!"

"You said once you did not like tame women," the girl interrupts, and then she flashes crimson. "How could she be so foolish as to let him learn she has ever thought of him since Mrs. Bowker's party?"

A new light leaps into the brown eyes.

"So you remember that very absurd speech of mine? Well, it is true, for all its absurdity; but I did not say I liked a virago, or that a woman should have her own will and pleasure in everything. I am quite sure that when I marry my wife must occasionally submit herself to me."

"You won't be satisfied with occasional submission," Betty says, slyly. "You are so very autocratic. Your wife will have to be an echo of your own thoughts and opinions—a very faint echo, because you won't allow of rivalry, and the glances she gives him is so full of mischief, pure and simple, that he laughs a little before he says—"

"It seems we each have had a poor opinion of the other, that we are each bent upon insulting the other—a modern Beatrice and Benedick!"

"Ab, but they agreed in the end," Betty answers, quickly. "I always think it a pity Beatrice remarried; but I dare say she led Benedick a very sad life after marriage. He deserved it for his former impertinences."

"And Beatrice was not impertinent? Not caustic, or unjust?" smiling.

"Never!" merrily.

"I cannot compliment you upon your wealth, Miss Betty; it is more than open to doubt. It strikes me forcibly that your moral health is in a very bad condition, and calls for instant attention. However, I am a merciful man, and will not hurl the avalanches of my indignation upon you now. I will wait a more fitting opportunity. That is my house—that red one on the crown of the hill!"

"And do you live quite alone?" Betty asks, ignoring his first speech.

"With the exception of the necessary servants. I have an admirable housekeeper."

"It must be horribly lonely. Haven't you a sister who would keep house for you?"

"I haven't a relative at all (save Mrs. Bowker), thank Heaven. I am a most fortunate man!"

"Fortunate! I should not like to be so much alone in the world; to feel that my misfortune or prosperity was nothing to any one."

"Oh, a man generally finds his best friends amongst strangers," calmly. "I am well content to stand alone. I suppose a girl would feel different."

"Yes. Dr. Wharton, where are we going?"

"To Forbes Wood, and then back again. Don't you like the scenery round?"

"Yes; but you said you were going into the village."

"I claimed the privilege of your sex, and changed my mind. It is pleasanter by this road, and one meets fewer people. I hate popular promenades."

Then he turns to look at her. Her eyes are bright, and there is a flush upon her cheek.

"You are more like the girl I met at Bowker's now. Exercise is good for you. Will you walk with me to-morrow? Unfortunately you have no chaperone, and I—well, neither have I," with a laugh, "but we are both unconventional people, and can dispense with ceremony."

"But Mrs. Fyson," begins Betty, when the doctor says abruptly—

"Leave her out of the question. She has nothing to do with it."

"She is my employer," demurely. "She has a perfect right to all my time."

"A right she will not have the chance to exercise; and I have only to hint that unless you reserve a certain time for relaxation she must soon look for another companion. And as she actually likes you (wonders will never cease) and stands in awe of me, she will not interfere with any arrangements you may make."

He has been speaking authoritatively; but now his tone changes, and with a gentle, respectful touch he has taken her hands in his.

"Let me be your friend. We are both lonely folk; and think what an advantage it will be for each to rub his or her angles against the other until we become more like civilized creatures!"

"Thank you, Dr. Wharton, for the hint so delicately conveyed," says Betty, cautiously, though her heart is beating fast with unaccustomed emotion. "The question of our friendship will entirely depend upon your own good behaviour. Now—drawing her hands from his—"I think we had best be going home. It is getting late, and I shall be wanted."

"Miss Betty," he says, after a pause, "do you often hear of your mother?"

"Neither of nor from her frequently. Just once in a while I get a message note. Of course I could call upon her at her own residence; but I cannot, will not, meet Price Congreve. He robbed me of home and my mother's love. I am not likely to forget or forgive that easily."

"If I could do as I would," says Hector, visionarily striking off the head of a tall native, "you should never see either of them again."

"What! not my mother?" with wide-open eyes.

"Certainly not. She has proved herself 'too bad a mother and too good a wife,' to parody a familiar couplet. For the life of me I cannot see that you owe her any duty. She has cast you adrift; that her new husband may live upon her fortune, which should be yours too. Do you mean to tell me that you love her as well as you did in the past?"

"Perhaps I love her more, because pity her so sincerely. I am afraid she will have a very bitter awakening."

"She ought to suffer!" boldly. "She had no thought for or pity on you."

"Poor mamma, she was never strong-minded, and Mr. Congreve had fascinated her completely. I never heard him speak an angry word to her, but none the less do I believe he never loved her, but married her to serve his own ends."

"Of course, and she should have been wise enough to see what was so palpable to her daughter. For my own part, I find her equally guilty of cruelty to you as ever Congreve was."

"You do not know mamma. She is kindness itself," the girl says, loyally. "I hope one day, when all things are pleasant, you will meet her. You will judge her more kindly then."

Hector looks incredulous.

"My opinions once formed rarely change, and I know between myself and the Congreves there could never be even the semblance of friendship. There, say no more on the subject; it is not a pleasant one." And by way of changing it he adds, "Will you think me too inquisitive if I ask, were you really christened Betty?"

"Not at all. Eleanor is Eleanor Maude. I am plain Betty, after my godmother. She was a spinster of property, all of which she was fond of declaring should be mine at her decease. I was quite an important personage until my tenth birthday; after that the glory departed from Deborah. She wore a wig, surmounted by a cap, and I, with a precious worthy throat after knowledge, dangled to see how she looked without it. On my birthday it was usual to give a dinner party, from which I need not say I was excluded. On this particular anniversary the sense of my wrongs was too great for me, and I hid myself behind some curtain, armed with a fishing-rod, line and hook. I was just immediately behind my godmother, and when dessert was brought in I threw out my line. The hook became fixed in the cap, and the wig came off with the cap. She looked so comical and oh, what a scene followed! Godmother rose in a fury, declaring she would not stay another hour in a house where she had been so grossly insulted, and rushing off to her room, packed her belongings, and went. Of course I was discovered, and mother, declaring with tears I was the most troublesome girl on earth, sent me to bed, minus the whipping I deserved. Three months later godmother died, bequeathing all her fortune to various charities—and that is how I made myself a pauper."

Hector laughs.

"You have been true to your old character, it seems. I know I have found you troublesome to the last degree. Don't wail in that fashion—and here is home. To-morrow I shall be waiting for you at the gates at three precisely. If you do not keep the appointment punctually you will find me gone. That sounds awfully rude, I know, but it will not do at the commencement of our friendship to allow you the whip hand of me. You would quickly be my tyrant. Good-bye, Miss Betty. Perhaps it was all for the best you lost that fortune."

"Perhaps, but I doubt it. I love money for the sake of the pretty things it can command. Good-bye, Dr. Wharton," and she flits up the trim drive with a softer look in her eyes than ever mortal saw there before.

In the days immediately following she keeps her appointments with her new friend with conscientious punctuality, quite regardless of Mrs. Fyson's somewhat unpleasant remarks.

A new element has entered her life, a new sense of joy floods all her being. This friendship is so pleasant, so altogether novel an experience; and not even to herself does she acknowledge the truth that Hector is something nearer and dearer than a mere friend.

Every other day Mrs. Fyson insists upon a visit from her doctor. Her health demands constant attention, she says, and no one understands her so well as Hector Wharton—rather no one else dare speak so plainly to her—and she has sense enough to appreciate his honesty.

Then at the close of each visit he is rewarded by a brief interview with Betty, which amply repays him for the irritation he suffers through his eccentric patient.

Usually, the girl meets him with a very bright face; but one morning she looks so pale and grave that he is troubled for her.

Opening the door of a room leading from the hall, he says, in authoritative tones,—

"Come in here."

And like a child she obeys. She he is beginning to know, his will is stronger than hers.

"Now, tell me what is the matter? Something has happened since yesterday."

"Yes. I have heard from mamma, and she does not write very happily. I—I hoped to see her soon; but Mr. Congreve has decided to go to Germany, and they left England this morning."

Hector's face hardens; for the sake of this girl he loathes and despises her mother.

"She he is only reaping the harvest she sowed. She has no ground for complaint," he says harshly. Then seeing the reproach on Betty's sad face, he adds quickly, "There, I am a brute to add to your trouble, child. Try to forgive me; and, Betty, you shall not worry yourself over what may be pure fancy, after all. Your mother may have meant no hint of sorrow, only you so distrust Congreve. You are always looking for evil news of him. Poor little girl! poor little girl!" and then one hand, strong, firm, and gentle, steals over her pretty bowed head, and all her heart stands still with a sudden rapture that is not without its element of pain.

"Dear," the low, grave voice goes on, "you are not alone whilst you will have my friendship and allow my care. Betty, do you think you can trust me?"

"Yes," she answers, hardly above her breath, "I know that I can."

"And you will bring all your troubles to me? You promise me so much."

"I would not like to burden you with them," she says, tremulously. "You have been so kind to me already. You have helped me so often and so much."

"It has been a pleasure to me to know I was some use to you."

How fast his breath comes, what a light there is in his eyes! Only Betty does not see it, her own not daring to meet his.

"I have been very happy of late, child, so happy that I have sometimes doubted if my bliss could last. Betty, don't you know? Don't you guess?"

"What?" whispers Betty; and then a step is heard outside, and Hector has only time to catch her to him, to kiss her sweet, coy lips once, and then to snatch up his hat and disappear through the doorway as the solemn butler enters.

Betty flies to her own room, pale with joy. What has come to her? Why is her heart so madly jubilant? What is this new, great emotion which transforms her whole life, and fills her whole soul?

Ah! Hector's kiss has told her all the truth; and shuddering on her knees, she sobs,—

"Thank Heaven! thank Heaven! he loves me! Oh! dear Heaven! make me worthy of my love!"

CHAPTER VI.

It is a very blushing, shame-faced Betty that joins Hector that afternoon at the gate. She cannot lift her eyes to those eager ones bent upon her. She does not even know what words she says in answer to his greeting.

She is only conscious that she loves him, and will love him until she dies. She only feels that on all this fair earth there is no girl so lucky as she.

She forgets all the vows she made in the time which seems so far back now, when she boldly declared not the best man in Christendom could persuade her to change her state until she had passed her third decade.

In almost utter silence they walk side by side, until the pleasant low-lying meadows are reached, and there is no one to see them, or hear their happy, foolish speech.

"Betty," says Hector, drawing her hand within his arm, "are you very angry with me for my boldness? Will you find it very hard to forgive me, that I kissed you without so much as saying 'by your leave'?"

And then, as she maintains a tremulous silence, he takes both her hands in his, and having her wholly at his mercy, looks unrestrainedly into her blushing face.

What he reads there must satisfy even him, for the next moment she is in his arms, clasped close to his breast, and he is raining kisses down upon the soft cheeks and sweet lips.

"Darling! darling!" he says in a passionate voice, "you do love me?" and she, with one arm about his neck, sighs back,—

"I love you! oh, yes, I love you!" and would hide her happy face from him if he would but permit.

"How much?" he demands. "How dear am I to you, sweetheart?"

"How can I tell? Can one measure the heart's affections? Oh, Hector! Oh, Hector, I wish I did not love you so dearly, for now to lose you would mean death!"

"And only by death can you lose me, or free yourself of your bonds. Betty, I think I have loved you always since I saw you first!"

"And I you," she answers softly, "although I did not then understand myself, or why you, a stranger, should make so great an impression upon my mind."

"You have not kissed me yet," is his next remark. "You must do so now!"

"I—I think not! I do not see the necessity!" with returning impudence.

"But I do, and my will is law! Betty, don't prove contumacious at the outset. You have got to wear your yoke gracefully."

"I'm sure I never shall!" with more than a touch of sauciness. "I never was meek or obedient. Eleanor monopolised all the virtues, and I the vices."

"I can quite believe you; but, Betty, I am a determined fellow, and I shall hold you so like this—until you do obey me. Why not surrender at discretion?"

And then, partly because she loves him so dearly, partly because she likes his masterful way, she lifts her mouth to his, and kisses him once.

"Darling! darling! when will you come to me? The house is ready for the bride; there is no reason for delay. When will you marry me?"

"It is for you to say," she answers, in a very low voice.

"Let me see, this is September. We will be married in December, for of course you must give Mrs. Fyson timely notice. Oh, Betty, what a lucky fellow I am!"

"I hope you will always believe so," she retorts, with a flash of her old spirit. "Indeed, I think your reward exceeds your merits!"

"You conceited little woman! What an idea you have of your own importance! Betty, I'm afraid we shall quarrel awfully."

"I'm quite sure we shall," promptly, "because you are so masterful, and I have a

will of my own. If you would prefer a meek Griselda there is time to draw back yet."

"I shall not do that, out of consideration for you. My desertion would mean death to you, you know," he says, teasingly; "and, after all, I don't think a Griselda would find me a pleasant companion. I should quarrel with her because of her meekness."

"You seem a very amiable character on the whole," Betty retorts, impudently. "I think I have been just a wee bit too precipitate in undertaking the management of you (she is so happy that all the natural gaiety of her disposition rises to the surface), but I refuse to be frightened by the prospect before me!" Then she adds, more gravely, "I wonder what mamma will say?"

"Her opinion matters very little!" Hector answers, with a slight frown.

"Oh, but it does! She is my own mother, and lately, just lately, I have thought by the tone of her letters that she is in some great trouble."

"Don't speak of her now!" impatiently. "Let this one hour be all our own," and he has his way, so that the golden moments are filled with lover's converse—foolish no doubt, but none the less earnest and blissful to these two so newly betrothed.

Mrs. Fyson is very angry when the news is broken to her.

"You are the only companion I ever had who in any way realised her duties, and my extreme need of unremitting attentions—and just as I am used to you, you propose leaving me. In my state of health I deserve more consideration. I really cannot part with you so soon, Miss Grath, and so I shall tell Dr. Wharton. Oh, my poor nerves! Give me my smelling salts, and pass the sal volatile. Oh, dear! oh, dear! I am a living martyr!" and throughout the day she makes her moan and only for her great happiness Betty could not have endured her whimperings and stupid reproaches.

In the morning Hector comes, and Mrs. Fyson pouncing upon him, says,—

"This is an ill-advised step of yours, Dr. Wharton. Miss Grath is a mere child yet, and you a man well past thirty!"

"The matter, madam, rests entirely between ourselves. If Miss Grath is satisfied, no one beside has any cause for complaint."

"But, my dear sir, a man of your position and fame could marry where he pleased, and Miss Betty Grath is a penniless nobody, who cannot assist you socially."

"It will be my pleasure to win distinction for her," he answers, calmly, and then the real reason of her objection to the betrothal transpires.

"Miss Grath had no right to form such an alliance without first consulting me! Am I never to be considered? She suits me as well as any thoughtless girl could, and I object to losing her so quickly. I say that it is her duty to remain with me for six months longer, instead of which she proposes leaving in three. I shall not be able to appoint her successor in so short a time. I am not like an ordinary person."

"You must certainly are not, madam," grimly; "but I consider three months a sufficient period in which to reconcile yourself to Miss Grath's resignation. At all events, I do not intend to wait longer for my wife!"

"I shall dispute her salary," says the invalid, irately, and a hot flush rushes to the doctor's brow.

"O! course, madam, if you choose to act dishonourably no one can prevent you; but in that case there is no necessity for Miss Grath to remain with you longer. It will be a little inconvenient for her, as I have no relative with whom I could place her, but our marriage can be consummated with very little delay."

Then Mrs. Fyson begins to sob, and lament her lonely condition, her terrible health, and finally lies prone upon her couch in an apparent swoon. Hector rings for her maid.

"Bring me a bowl of water," he says,

quietly; and the girl obeying, he applies it with such a liberal hand that the invalid starts up with a sudden cry,—

"That will do—you are drowning me!"

"Your mistress is better now. I will leave her in your care!" Hector says, quietly; and goes down to his little sweetheart, with a sly smile in his eyes. "I'll venture to say she won't faint in my presence again," he says, after concluding his story; "and see here, Betty, you are not to submit to any impertinence from her. I won't have it. You are my property now!"

In the days that follow, Betty has much that is unpleasant to endure, but her love sustains her; and to Hector she makes no complaints.

The three months are fleeting by, and soon her wedding-day will come. The thought that she will belong wholly then to her lover makes her strong to bear all that otherwise must have irked her.

She has written to her mother, informing her of her engagement; but no answer has reached her, and, secretly, the girl is very anxious concerning her. This, however, she does not confide to Hector. It is the one thing in which they have not perfect sympathy.

Towards the end of the second month, Hector comes hurriedly into the house.

"Betty, it is too bad, but I must leave you. I have received a telegram from Lord Daisley, begging me to go to Ayrshire at once, as his only child is down with fever, and he wants me to watch the case. I can't very well refuse. If I save the lad my fortune is made, and for your sake I am ambitious. Dr. Ingle will see after my patients here; and for the rest, my dear, I will write you often. Now, wish me good-bye! I have not a moment to lose if I would catch the next train northwards."

"Good-bye!" says the girl, "I shall miss you cruelly; but, of course, you ought to go. You won't forget to write me often. Ayrshire is so far away, and if harm come to you I—I do not know how I should bear my life!"

"What harm could come to me, darling? You must not be anxious, and yet it is good to know you love me so well. Good-bye! One more kiss! good-bye! In a little while we shall need to say that word no more!"

The place seems very dull without him, and Betty, who has always declared she hated sentiment, is much inclined to mope about the house, only her pride forbids this; and then, too, Mrs. Fyson is doubly exigent now that Dr. Wharton is gone.

But the arrival of his first letter makes Betty brave to bear anything, and the same post brings her news from Africa.

Eleanor is well and happy; and Dick, who has had another stroke of luck, forwards a cheque to cover Betty's passage out and her mother too, supposing that the latter is not happy in her fresh matrimonial venture.

"I will answer both to-night," the girl thinks, as she walks down the drive; "but what am I to do with Dick's money? I have no need of it. I wonder if I might give it all to mother, only then Price Congreve would have the spending of it. I wish Hector were here to advise me!"

The sound of an opening gate makes her look quickly up, and she sees a woman coming towards her—a woman in worn raiment, with a white, haggard face, and threads of grey darning the gold of her hair—a weary, travel-stained, helpless creature, as unlike her mother as it is possible to conceive, and yet in one swift glance Betty knows it is her mother, and runs with outstretched hands to meet her.

But the poor creature falls weeping at her feet, moaning out,—

"Do not harden your heart against me. Oh, my child! oh, my child! I am rightly punished for my sin against you!"

And Betty, stooping, lifts her in her strong, young arms.

"Not there, mother, not as a suppliant, but here in my arms, here as a welcome and beloved one. Oh, why should you kneel to me—me, your child! Dar-

ling, you must tell me nothing now. Wait until you have eaten and slept," and all the while she is kissing the pale, aged face, and fondling the faded hair with the softest, most loving hands. "Cry, if it will ease your heart! Cry, oh poor little mother! dear little mother! We will never be parted again!"

And the weary, sobbing, wretched woman clings to her as if her very touch brought comfort and support. And all the while Betty's mind is racked with the thought,—

"Where can I take her?"

She knows well enough Mrs. Fyson will not accord the wanderer a shelter. She is not a generous woman, and Betty has offended her. Then, like an inspiration, comes the thought of Lizzie, the pleasant housemaid, whose people live in the village; and, leading poor Mrs. Congreve to a seat, she bids her wait for her return.

She is not long gone, and her face wears a relieved look as she joins her mother.

"Come, dear!" she says, with infinite gentleness, "I have obtained nice lodgings for you. We will go to them at once. It is only a short walk, and I can see you very often!"

And so, with an arm about the other's waist (for she is very weak and feeble) she leads her to Lizzie's home.

Lizzie's mother is a prudent woman and asks no questions, so that her lodger is quickly installed in the one spare room, and Betty is listening to her sad story—it is sad, indeed.

From the time they left England Price Congreve had neglected and ill-treated her. His luck at cards, too, had been terrible, and he vented his rage on the unfortunate woman he had married.

He squandered her money, raised all he could upon her annuity, which he had fancied was treble the amount it really represented; and, finding she was a burden rather than a help to him, had coarsely told her to return home to the friends who were too proud to acknowledge his existence; and when she prayed with bitter tears and sobs that he would not send her away he struck her, and laughed, as he told her, that she had never any right to his name, he being already a married man when they met.

But for the kindness of the English consul at Berlin, where they then were, the poor little woman could never have reached home! "And now," she says, in mournful conclusion, "I cannot stay where I am known. The shame of it all will kill me! I cannot meet my old friends, or return to the old haunts. Oh, Betty! oh, Betty! if I could but have seen with your eyes; but I was always a foolish body, though I thought myself so wise!"

And then Betty tells her of her engagement, for it seems her letter never reached her mother; shows her, too, the kindly lines Eleanor has written, and the generous gift Dick has sent.

"And what are we to do with it, dear, I don't know," she says, "for your home, of course, will be with me."

It is late when she reaches Providence Villa, her mother being loth to let her go, and there is no chance of replying to Hector until midnight, when she is safe in her room.

Then she writes a long and tender letter, begging her lover for her sake to give her mother shelter, dwelling much upon her sufferings and privations, and ending by a passionate assertion that come what will she will never forsake the woman who gave her birth; and she falls asleep, confident that Hector will welcome her gladly.

Alas! alas! Hector's heart is yet hot against her mother, and he replies that he will never extend the hand of friendship to one who could treat his darling as she had done. The best and wisest thing Mrs. Congreve can do is to join her daughter at Natal.

CHAPTER VII.

Nor a word does Betty say of this letter to her mother. Surely she has suffered enough

already. Why should she add to her sorrows? So the girl bears herself bravely before the poor, weak woman, who clings to her as though their positions were reversed, and she the child.

"Oh," she says tearfully, "I wish you had never met Dr. Wharton, then we could have gone to Natal together. There, no one knows my story here. I dare not go abroad, lest I shall meet old friends or acquaintances. I do not think I am strong enough to bear their scorn."

"No one will blame you, mother, darling," the daughter says tenderly, and then she goes away to write her pitiful appeal to Hector.

"My darling," she says, "not even for your sake can I desert my mother. She is ill, unhappy, alone. She has no one to comfort her save me. Oh, surely! surely, Hector! you who have been so good and generous to me, will not deny me the privilege of sheltering my mother. For myself I would ask nothing, but for her I forget my pride and turn suppliant. Ah, dear, if your love will not stand this first test, I give you back every promise you have made. You are absolutely free. A bad daughter will not make a good wife. Hector, my fate is in your hands; deal with me as you will. Be your decision ever so hard, I shall not reproach you. But, oh! for our love's sake, do not leave me long in suspense. I shall wait a week for your reply; and if I do not receive it at the close of the seven days, I shall know that all is over between us, and shall leave for Africa. You need not write farewell. I could not bear it. Leave me at least some chance of forgetfulness. Oh no! no! I never shall forget you, my Hector, my first, last love! Heaven have you in its keeping is the prayer of your poor little "BETTY."

With what sick anxiety she waits the arrival of every post how shall I tell? With what a beating heart she steals to the gates to watch the slow-moving postman; and when he passes by without delivering any least line from Hector, what an agonised sigh breaks from her lips!

Her grief is all the more cruel that she cannot weep—tears are never easy with Betty.

And the seventh day passes; the last post is in, but there is no letter for her. Like a wild thing she rushes to her room, and casting herself face downwards on the floor, writhes, and twists and moans, in the agony that can find no natural vent.

Poor little Betty! How long she lies there she does not know and she is altogether regardless of Mrs. Fyson's repeated ringing.

When at last, a maid knocks loudly at the door, she springs to her feet, her face blanched, and her hands clenched in the folds of her skirt. Very fierce she looks, and the girl starts back, aghast at her altered appearance.

"Oh, miss! you are ill? And mistress sent me to say would you come down."

"I can't, Alice! I can't! I—I—oh, my head, my head!" and she reels against the wall.

But for the girl's friendly support she must have fallen. For a moment she rests in the strong, kindly arms, then lifting herself erect, says,—

"You are very good to me! I will thank you better when I am more myself. I am well enough now to go down. No, no, you need make no excuse for me!" and so she quits the room hastily, and joins Mrs. Fyson.

"I rang for you six times!" the invalid says petulantly. "Why did you not come? You presume too much on your position as Dr. Wharton's fiancée."

"I am sorry for my fault," the girl retorts with miserable defiance; "and you shall not suffer a repetition of it. I leave here on Friday en route for Africa. I must ask you to release me at an earlier date than the one arranged. Of course I forfeit my salary."

"Africa!" says the invalid shrilly. "Girl, are you mad? Why, in a week or two at most you are to be married."

"You mistake, madam; I have released

Dr. Wharton! I have changed my mind! I have been thinking of these things for days, and have written to the shipping office inquiring for berths, terms, &c. I find I can go on Friday."

"You are a fool!" is the polite response. "You'll never get such another chance of settling, and I think Dr. Wharton is well rid of you!"

"Thank you, madam; you are nothing if not kind!" bitterly; and with a low, half-mocking courtesy, Betty passes out and up to her room.

The good ship *Etruria* has left port two days, and is well on her way, when a Highland girl rushes out of her cottage in search of her mother.

"Come hame, mither, the mon has spoken, and it is very foolish questions he's asking! I canna soothe him; it's you maybe can do that!" and the elder woman hastens to follow her to the little two-roomed house they call home.

In the front room is a bed, and on that bed lies a man with bandaged head, tossing to and fro in the weariness of fever—he is Hector Wharton!

"How long have I been here?" he asks, eagerly, as the woman bends over him.

"Nigh on ten days, sir, and it's bad ye ha' been. At times we didna think ye'd pull through. Dear, dear, it is good indeed, to hear ye speak like a sound man—ye've been clean daft all the while."

"Has anyone been here asking for me?" is the next question.

"La! na, sir; who should come a sperrin? Its verra few folla we see up here. But I misdoubt me, ye'll be makin' your friends anxious. Here's Peggy here would ha' walked miles to tell 'em about ye—but, lor', we didna know ye fra' Adam. I was mairst scared when I found ye a lyin' at t' bottom of 's cliff, and it is hard work we had, Peggy and me to get ye up here."

"You have been most good to me, and I will do my best to repay you for your services—for your kindness I never can. How far am I from Daisley Castle?"

"A matter o' eight miles, sir. Is it a message you would send there? My Peggy 'd tak' it wi' pleasure. Sakes; if only we'd kenned ye come fra' there, hoo much worry we might ha' saved! Peggy, lass, ye go on to Daisley, and tell his lordship, Mr.—Mr.—"

"I am Hector Wharton."

"Mr. Wharton is lyin' here wi' a crackit skull; its early yet, and ye'll get there betimes, and never fear but they'll pit ye up for the night. Now, sir, ye jist lie still whilst I get ye your parritch!"

It is days before Hector Wharton can be moved to Daisley, and Lord Daisley visits him frequently, being grateful for the skill which has spared his child to him, counting Hector amongst his dearest friends. From the doctor's own narrative it transpires that, being restless, he had risen early and taken a long walk (to tell the truth, he had been fighting with his prejudices against Mrs. Congreve, or rather Mrs. Grath), and did not notice how great a distance he was placing between himself and the Castle.

He wanted to please Betty, but it was hard to conquer himself; and just when he had achieved the victory, a grey mist swooped down over mountain and glen in the peculiar and favourite fashion of mists in Scotland, and in some wise he lost his footing, and fell into a fairly deep gully. But for good Mrs. McBride he must have perished, and Betty never would have known the truth.

On the first day of his return to Daisley his host hands him his letters, and naturally he selects Betty's from the pile. What must she think, poor little girl, of his long silence? Oh! how he wishes his last had been kinder.

"But she will never doubt me," he thinks. "She is too true herself—Heaven bless her! Well, I will make amends as far as lies in my power. Betty is right to stick to her mother,"

and then he tears open the envelope, and reads the poor child's farewell.

He goes at once to his host.

"I must leave here to-day," he says, in a broken voice. "I—I—oh, great Heaven! I am afraid all my life is spoiled through this my wretched accident, and what a brute she must think me!" Then, being very weak and excited, he gives one strange, awful cry, and falls to the ground.

It is days before he can get about again, and all the while he is eating his heart out with anxiety concerning Betty—his poor, brave, unselfish little Betty—who has sacrificed her love to her duty, and gone broken-hearted to a distant and strange land.

Betty Grath stands at the gate, opening into her brother's garden. The house is removed from all others, and the solitude is pleasant to the pale English girl. Ah! what a changed Betty it is, who so frequently assures her mother she has given up nothing for her sake—that she and her lover are better—oh! far better—apart.

She is not without lovers here, but to them all she says, "I shall never marry," and if they find a fault or flaw in her character, it is that she is too cold.

To night as she stands under the brilliant sky hosts of memories come crowding upon her, until with a little sob she says,—

"Ah, dear! it was so small a boon I asked, and I loved you so well. I would have given my life for you; but you would not grant my first and last request. Perhaps it is all for the best; but oh, my heart! oh, my heart! I could give ten, twenty, ay! all the years of my life to see him once again!"

And then beneath the starlit sky she sees a figure approaching—such a familiar figure that her heart stands still, and in sudden anguish she says,—

"Ah, dear Heaven! he is dead! and this is but his ghost I see!"

Then all in a moment she is caught in a pair of strong arms. There is nothing ghostly about that embrace, and her eyes are searching the pale, worn face, her ears drinking in the music of his words.

"I came as soon as I could, Betty. I never got your letter until days after you sailed. Oh, my darling! oh, my darling! what must you have thought and believed? My last letter to you was so brutal, will you forgive, can you forgive, or will you send me back to England hopeless and despairing?"

"Hector," she sobs, "oh! Hector, I have been so unhappy! I never guessed, dear heart, that you were ignorant of my plans. I was too hasty, and is it true you love me still—that you have come all this weary way to find me out?"

"It is true, Betty. Life without you is not worth living. I love you with all my heart, with all my strength. My little wife, my darling wife!"

With a gesture of passionate abandonment she draws his head down upon her breast.

"Pray with me, Hector, that I may be worthy of your love. Oh, my darling, how good Heaven is!"

A month later Dr. Wharton takes his bride back to England, but Mrs. Grath remains in the country where her sad story is not known.

[THE END.]

VIOLETS refuse to give up their scent, like the other flowers, to distillation. Slabs of slate set in wooden frames are spread thick with hog's lard to receive them. On this bed they are scattered, and the slates are then stacked one above the other like the shelves of a cabinet. The flowers must be renewed three times a day, all through the flowering season. By that time the lard is permeated with the scent, which can then be withdrawn from it into spirit.

FACETIÆ.

A pillow thief held on to the pillow, though he gave the pillow the slip.

Even a bookworm will turn when you take away one of his favourite volumes.

EARTHQUAKES may be regarded as very aristocratic. At least they belong to the upper crust.

The reason why men succeed who mind their own business is because there is so little competition.

"The external use of hot water will prevent wrinkles." How about the married man who is kept in hot water most of the time?

MAN takes with his right hand and gives with his left until he considers it more profitable to take with both.

POLICE CAPTAIN: "You think your dog was poisoned at the South End?" Complainant: "No, sir; he was poisoned all over."

It's a bad idea to look the stable door after the horse is stolen. When if the thief should repeat and bring back the horse?

WOODEN: "Oh, what a beautiful sunset! I never saw such a magnificent sunset in all my life!" Wagley: "What nonsense! You never saw any other sun set."

"Pat, you are wearing your stockings wrong side outward." "Och! and don't I know it sure—there's a hole on the other side, there is."

When a young man sits in the parlour talking nonsense to his sweetheart—that's capital. But when he has to stay in of evenings after they're married—that's labour.

You can gain a reputation for wisdom by not speaking a single word. Sit still and look wise—mankind is prone to reverence the solemn ass.

Tom novel of the future, it is hoped, may be much more entertaining reading than the talk about it. If not yawning will be the chief exercise of the future.

EDWIN (tenderly touching her forehead): "Sweet one, let me be like this lovely hair." ANGELINA (tremulously): "What—nearest—what would you be?" Edwin (captivously): "All your own."

"How many visitors do you have a day, on an average?" asked a lady of the custodian at a public resort. "Ain't no average," he replied. "Some days there's more and some less."

IN THE CLUB.—DE SLOPPY: "Well, Al, dear boy, I don't see why fellows discuss the marriage question. It is simple enough. If a fellow's poor, he can't afford to get married; and if he is—ah—rich, he don't need to."

"What do you suppose started the impression that fish was efficacious as brain food?" "The fact that the fish themselves are educated." "Eh?" "Well, they go in schools, you know."

A PLAIN, SOLID ARGUMENT.—"Now, then, McCorrigle, no prevarication. Tell us all that passed between you and the defendant," said the judge. "Brickbats, yer honour; jist brickbats," answered McCorrigle.

MAMMA: "Have you washed your face, Johnny?" Johnny: "Yes m." Mamma: "And your hands?" Johnny: "Yes." Mamma: "And your neck?" Johnny: "Aw, see here, ma, I ain't a angel."

MOTHER: "I trust that you are happy with your husband, Maud?" Maud: "Oh, yes; as happy as one can expect to be with a man who is helping of himself half the time, and of his first wife the other half."

LAWYER: "Madam, I'm sorry to say that I don't see the slightest of a chance for you to break your uncle's will." Woman: "Well, to be frank with you, I don't see a ghost of a chance to pay you for what you have already done if the will isn't broken." Lawyer: "On second thought, madam, I think the will can be broken."

EROT: "How do you like my new engagement ring?" Emma: "I never liked it. It was too large for me when I used to wear it." And Eugie and Emma walk on different sides of the street now.

MISS DE BOWEN (school teacher): "I am informed that you loudly spoke at me on the public streets as an old maid." Bad Boy (much scared): "N-n-o, m's'm. I said y'r mother was an old maid."

TOO PREVIOUS.—Waiting Teacher (watching her finger movements): "A beautiful hand, Miss Caroline—" Fair Pupil (blushing): "La, Mr. Soribson!" "Is only to be gained by persistent practice. Hold your pen a little more loosely, Miss Caroline."

LOVE AND WAR.—Spratts: "It is said that all is fair in love and war, but there is one great difference between them." Bloomburger: "What is it?" Spratts: "In love the fighting does not begin until after the engagement is over."

IN FRANCE.—Railway Official: "M'sieu, you valet has been run over and cut into a dozen pieces." Languid Englishman: "Haw! Be good enough, please, to bring the pieces that—haw! contains the key of my hat box—haw!"

A LECTURER is explaining the beauties and contrasts to be seen in the Alps. "Winter and summer combined. With one foot I stood upon the icy glacier, and with the other plucked blooming flowers from the bosom of the valley."

AFTER a singer had "executed" the once-popular song, "My love lies dreaming," a rustic auditor broke the ensuing silence by muttering: "If she lies while she's dreamin', what sort of a crittur must she be when she's awake?"

D: "So you and the handsome Bramble girl are one?" T: "That's what I thought when the parson married us, but I have since concluded that we are ten." D: "What do you mean?" T: "She is one and I'm naught, my dear fellow."

DUDLEY CANESUCKER: "You are absorbed in thought; tell me, Miss Fanny, what are you thinking about?" Miss Fanny: "Something grand; something sublime!" Dudley Canesucker: "You were? Now tell what was it you were thinking about—me?"

DOCTOR: "My dear sir, you are a dangerously sick man. Your heart is badly deranged and is very irregular in its action, and is beating hard enough to tear itself to pieces." Patient: "Hold on, doctor, that is my Waterbury watch you have been listening to."

EDIRON: "Young man, your poem is excellent in many respects, but as we have enough such material to last us for the next ten years, we feel obliged to decline it." Spring Poet (hopefully): "Well, sir, you will have to have something for the eleventh year."

He sat and looked at the busy editor for about fifteen minutes steadily. Finally, he yawned sleepily, and remarked, "There are some things in this world that go without saying." "I know it," snapped the editor; "but there are too many things that any a good deal without going."

A MAN OF NERVE.—He: "I know, Miss Kajones, that it looks like great presumption for me to speak of love to you. I have neither youth nor good looks. I am poor, uneducated, and have no influential friends. I have nothing that can attract the admiration of a young lady." She: "You are mistaken, Mr. Wholesaler. I admire your magnificent nerve."

A LEAFY gentleman in a wig and gown was hurrying down Chancery Lane. "Would you be good enough to tell me the name of this street, sir?" said a small street Arab, addressing him with unobtrusive manifestations of profound reverence. "Yes, my boy, Chancery Lane," replied the barrister. "I moved it was," retorted the boy with a chuckle. "Then why did you ask me, you young rascal?" "Cos I wanted counsel's opinion!"

LECTURER (on the French Revolution): "It is impossible to imagine the chaos that reigned—confusion and anarchy everywhere. In our more peaceful conditions we cannot even imagine such a state of things." Man at the back of the hall: "Yes, we can, mister. Come up to our house; we're morie."

A GOOD story is told of Rogers, the poet. A lady, very fond of her husband, notwithstanding his ugliness of person, once said to the poet: "What do you think? My husband has just laid out fifty guineas for a baboon, just to please me." "The dear little man!" said Rogers; "it's just like him!"

WILLIE's papa had a visitor who wore a very tall silk hat. Willie had never seen such a tall hat, and as they were going up the walk to the house he astonished the visitor and mortified his papa by exclaiming, "Papa, does that gentleman's head go up right above top of that hat?"

BROWN: "I thought that Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Jones wouldn't have anything to do with one another." FOG: "They don't; but when they met in a doorway where there were crowds of people trying to get in and out, of course they couldn't resist the temptation to have a little chat."

WILLIE's composition on soap is worth printing. He writes:—"Soap is a kind of stuff made into nice-looking cakes that smell good and taste awful. Soap japes always taste the worst when you get it in your eye. My father says the Eskimos don't never use soap. I wish I was a Eskimore."

On a witness being called in a case before a circuit court, a man rose up in the court and said, "My lord he's gone." "Where has he gone to?" exclaimed the judge presumptively. "It is his duty to be here." "My lord, I wadna like to commit myself as to whanghe's gone, but he's deld."

DE GILLIE: "Booby, did your mother make any derogatory remarks about my singing after I was gone the other night?" Booby: "N-n-o, she didn't make any derogatory remarks." De Gillie: "I'm glad to hear that." Booby: "But she nearly died laughing."

COLONEL YERGEN takes the premium for absent-mindedness. He was sitting at his desk writing a few nights ago, when one of his children entered. "What do you want? I can't be disturbed now." "I only want to say good-night, pa." "Never mind, now. To-morrow morning will do just as well."

How it is DONE.—Prisoner: "So you think you can get me off?" Lawyer: "Easily enough. I will prove to the court that you are a lunatic, and you will be sent to an asylum." "But how am I to get out of the asylum?" "I will get two respectable doctors to swear that you are not a lunatic."

FRONCE is a little fellow who is just learning to go to church. Last Sunday when she came home her mother asked her what she thought of the sermon. "Ugh" was the irreverent answer, "me sitted an' pitted an' sitted and got dreffel tired, an' the preacher said an' said an' said, and keeped on sayin'."

"There was an annoying hitch in the great ocean scene in my play last night," said a young East Side playwright, with a sad smile. "When the hero jumped off the raft to save the heroine he got off in the wrong place, and one of the waves kicked him in the stomach. It seemed to knock all the sense out of him, for he got up and walked ashore." "What did the heroine do?" "She sat on a wave and laughed."

MR. BLOSSOM: "I don't think you are doing right in forbidding Nelly to receive gentlemen callers. Why did you do it?" Mrs. Blossom: "I do not desire the child to be over-merry." Mr. Blossom: "You seem to forget that you were young once, that you needed gentleman callers, and that you married." Mrs. Blossom: "Indeed, I don't, Mr. Blossom; and what is more, I don't intend to have Nelly make a fool of herself because her mother did."

SOCIETY.

TENNISON'S last poem, "A Song," was paid for at two guineas a word.

WEDDING rings are getting narrower, but they are of great thickness.

TOLLS here will be used this summer. It is not cretable, and yet soft and cloudy.

Among Von Mollke's favourite books were the works of Shakespeare, Scott, and Carlyle.

CAR'S eyes and tiger eyes are added to the imitation jewels with which dress trimmings are adorned.

THE Prussian Reichstag has rejected the petition to admit women to the study of the liberal professions.

THE Belgium Rooms in Buckingham Palace are to be, to a considerable extent, redecorated and refurnished during this month, in anticipation of the visit of the German Emperor, who is to occupy this suite of apartments during his stay in London.

THE Duchess of Albany is looking very much better for her stay on the Continent. Her Royal Highness takes a great share in Royal social duties, all of which she performs with great grace and tact. The Duchess is a great favourite in England, and especially in London.

MRS. HARRIET PEECHER STOWE, who wrote "Uncle Tom's Cabin," is nearly eighty years of age. She is marvellously active for her age, though she only uses her pen now to write to her family. Each month she sends a letter to the Duke of Argyll, who never fails to reply to it.

THE grotesque reigns in jewellery now. A gigantic spider is the approved ornament for the hair, and has a yellow sapphire body, with diamond legs. Lizards and serpents, blazing with diamonds and emeralds, nestle in the folds of my lady's dress or sparkle against her fair flesh in hideous gorgeousness.

THE teacher of a school for typewriters says: Women learn quicker than men. They are more in demand than men. They give better satisfaction as a rule. I own not a woman's rights man by any means, but it is my observation that the woman of to-day who is put on her mettle surpasses her brother.

THERE are many statistics and, but, relief in plaster to be seen that one would be glad to have as types of beauty, were it not for the unpleasant impression that white plaster always gives. A simple treatment will give to these objects the agreeable tone of old ivory. This is done by using orange shellac diluted with alcohol to prevent too great shrinkage. Put on evenly with a brush.

A CHICAGO lady recommends the use of horseradish as a means of alleviating the grippe, at once effecting a thorough cure. Ordinary green horseradish eaten at frequent intervals during the day, and in connection with food at the table, if food is eaten at all, has been found remarkably efficacious in banishing the distressing cough that frequently lingers after all the other symptoms of the grip have gone.

PERHAPS the dearest thing about the "Navalries" is the season ticket, one of which has been presented to the Princess of Wales. It is a small but beautifully designed medallion, the centre of which consists of a disc of timber, cut from one of the planks of the old *Victory*, and this is set in a circle of gold. These "tickets" are destined to be preserved long after the show has been closed and forgotten.

SILVER hearts are becoming a great fad. They come in all sizes, from that of a visiting card to the size of a three-penny piece. Nearly all of them are handsomely engraved or enamelled. They open like a locket. These hearts are used as a true love charm, and are designed to be placed around the neck of the fair mistress, who in time is constantly reminded of her lover.

STATISTICS.

158,000 people are born in London every twelve months.

THERE are eight soldiers located in Ireland to one in Scotland.

GERMAN shorthand writers rarely take down more than forty-five words a minute.

THE piazza of St. Peter's, Rome, in its widest limits, can hold 624,000 persons.

ACCORDING to the insanity returns, sixteen cases in 1,000 are caused by love affairs.

MORE than half-a-million houses have been built in London during the last forty years.

GEMS.

THERE is room for everybody in this big world. Fiction comes from the fact that too many want the front room.

THERE are many vices which do not deprive us of friends; there are many virtues which prevent our having any.

THE errors of great men and the good deeds of reprobates should not be reckoned in our estimates of their respective characters.

NONE are so fond of secrets as those who do not mean to keep them; such persons covet secrets as spendthrifts covet money—for the purpose of circulation.

LET each one test his ambitions and see to it that they are worthy in themselves and laid on solid foundations, remembering that the truly valuable man is valuable in every stage of his career. Carlyle says, "Do the duty which lies nearest thee—which thou knowest to be a duty. Thy second duty will already have become clearer."

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BOSTON CREAM.—Take one pound of brown sugar, boil in four quarts of water for a minute; when cold add two ounces tartaric acid, one pennyworth essence of lemon, and white of egg swished; strain and bottle it. For a drink pour out half a tumbler, fill up with water, add a little baking soda, stir about, and you have a fine cheap cooling drink.

DEVILLED TOAST.—One slice of toast, one teaspoonful of butter, half teaspoonful of mustard, a few grains of cayenne, one teaspoonful of Worcester sauce. Have the bread nicely toasted, beat the butter with a spoon till quite soft, and add all the other things, gradually raising till quite smooth. Spread this on the toast; it will tempt a sickly appetite.

BAKED INDIAN PUDDING.—Pour one quart of boiling milk on three tablespoonfuls of granulated Indian meal. Cook in a double boiler one hour, stirring often. Add a heaping tablespoonful of butter, one teaspoonful of salt, one-half cup of treacle, two eggs slightly beaten, and one quart of cold milk. Bake in a buttered dish one hour. Serve with whipped cream. Measure the spoonfuls of meal, heaping, but do not add more than given in the rule, as the meal swells, and the pudding would be dry.

TO REMOVE STAINS.—Beats, wine, ink, or mildew stains can be removed by first wetting the articles on the stained place in clean cold water. Then apply a lotion made of one tablespoonful of lemon juice, one tablespoonful of purest cream of tartar, and one tablespoonful of oxalic acid; put all into a pint of distilled water (or rain water), shake it before using, and apply with a soft cloth till the spot is saturated with the lotion, then sponge it off again in clean cold water. Repeat till the stain disappears.

MISCELLANEOUS.

SOMEBODY has found a way of "distilling" musk from coal oil, and the product is about a hundred times more powerful than any scent ever known. This must be a little too strong, one would fancy.

A VICTIM writes to an American paper to say that he was completely cured of *la grippe* by leaving a can of white tar camphor open on his table, and this remedy is corroborated by the testimony of others.

THE North German Lloyd Company claims to stand first on the record for quantity of mail matter carried on one trip of an ocean steamer. On the 17th of last December the steamer carried 1,002 sacks of mail.

SATISFACTION in a Japanese theatre is proclaimed by shouting out the name of the actor or by the words, "Ten riyo!" "One thousand riyo!"—a *riyo* is a yen, a silver dollar, or three shillings—expressive of the cash value of the acting in the estimation of the crier.

SHOULD the Jews crowd to Palestine in any considerable number they could neither make a living at any business nor find food enough to support them, the country being miserably poor as to agricultural products. The idea is full of sentiment, but no one can thrive on that.

THE new machine is to be attached to pillar-boxes—only a few at first; the magic "penny in the slot" will entice forth a small envelope containing a little memorandum-book and a sheet or two of blank paper, together with a penny stamp. The syndicate which is exploiting the scheme, hopes to make its profit out of the advertisements inserted in the memorandum books.

ACCORDING to official statistics, there has been an enormous increase in the consumption of tobacco in France through the last two or three years. It is estimated that each head of the population consumes two pounds weight in the week per annum. It is in cigarettes that the largest increase is apparent. Cigars and tobacco for pipes are steady, while the use of snuff is rapidly declining.

WOMEN in one part of the world, at any rate, do not appreciate "the right to vote." Since 1888, the female population of "cities of the first class" in America have enjoyed the privilege of voting at municipal elections. The following spring, 496 women were registered in the city of Altoona, but less than 300 voted. Last year 291 registered, but less than 200 voted. This year 224 have been registered, but the election has not yet taken place.

PERSONS who would like an exciting experience easy to have is in Paris, and those which they will never forget. An ingenious mechanician has contrived a plan for dropping a roomful of living persons from the top to the bottom of the Eiffel Tower—a distance of a thousand feet—and with no personal injury save a temporary loss of breath. The room in which the visitors are placed is shaped like a cone, and is allowed to slide into space point downwards. To break its fall, and to prevent any unpleasant concussion to its inmates, the projectile drops into a deep basin of water.

WHAT is a billion? The reply is very simple—million times a million. This is quickly written, and quicker still pronounced. But no man is able to count it. You can count 100 or 170 a minute; but let us suppose that you go as far as 200 then an hour would produce 12,000 a day, 288,000 and a year, or 365 days, 105,120,000. Let us suppose now that Adam, at the beginning of his existence, had begun to count, had continued to do so, and was counting still, he would not even now, according to the usually supposed age of our globe, have counted near enough. For to count a billion he would require 9,512 years, 342 days, five hours and twenty minutes, according to the above rule.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. G. B.—We know nothing of the property to which you refer.

BLUNDELL.—The late Lord Aylesford died in Texas, in July, 1885.

MA BELLE.—It is correct to say the "county town" of this or that county.

COUNTIES.—Compton is in South Warwickshire, on the borders of Oxfordshire.

GIVE.—Her Majesty's ship *Burydice* was wrecked on March 24, 1878.

F. A. L.—The answer applied to proceedings by the wife; not by the guardians.

ANKHOUR.—A debt is not recoverable which has not been acknowledged within six years.

LADDIE.—Yes, a man may be legally married when only twenty years of age.

SUPREMACY.—A boy over thirteen, who has passed the fourth standard, can be employed full time.

LADYBIRD.—The "capital" of a country is the seat of Government; in England this is London.

PUEZLED.—The line "Yet much remains to conquer still" will be found in Milton's sonnet to Cromwell.

DOBBER.—A publican is required by law to take in a dead body, if requested to do so by a police constable.

LOUIS.—A landlord can only distrain on goods found on the debtor's premises; lodger's goods being excepted.

DISPERADO.—There is no difference between a sentence of penal servitude "for life" and for "natural life."

DOUBTFUL.—"Valet" is the same word as "valet," and each is an offshoot of the feudal "vassal."

DOLLY.—A "nincompoop" was originally a person not of sound mind (*non compos mentis*).

MOCKIE.—1. 1844. 2. *Punch* started in 1841: the *Illustrated London News* in the following year. 3. Yes.

BRITANNIA.—The carrier was responsible for the safe custody of your goods while in his control.

LITTLE NELL.—Some put faith in *paraffin*; others in *anthracite*. Try both in succession.

CURIOUS.—The infirmity causes its victim to mistake one colour for another.

A. SUFFERER.—Consult a medical man. You would not find the information in any book.

M. L.—A penny stamp will suffice. Some witness should be present.

M. B.—It depends entirely on the conditions of the indenture.

PAUL.—It would be against our rule to recommend any particular dealer.

SARAH.—No one can settle the question for you. It is a matter to be decided between your husband and yourself alone.

LONDONER.—Hyde Park is the largest park "in London." Richmond is not "in London." Richmond Park consists of 2,253 acres; Hyde Park is 350 acres.

INQUIRER.—The sentence "S. argit agrestes, tibi silva frondea" may be read as "The wood scatters for you the leaves of the country-side."

OSCAR.—The books and instruments being the tools of the "emigrant" are admitted free of duty. All that would be necessary would be to prove the good faith.

OSBY.—Lichfield is a city, deriving its charter from Edward VI., 1549; and it is also a county of a city in itself.

RAEDEL.—The children by the first wife share equally with those of the second wife. The widow is entitled to a third of the personality.

DECK.—In England and Scotland partridge shooting begins on the 1st of September, and in Ireland on the 29th of September.

LEICOLN.—A solicitor, like any other person, is bound by his agreement; but, of course, you may have to prove that agreement.

O. D. R.—The property being already the son's by deed of gift, no probate duty would be payable in respect of it on the father's death.

LE WANT OF ADVICE.—It is impossible to advise on the disposal of property without full family particulars. You must consult a solicitor.

PUNCH.—You can only learn the printing trade properly by working at the case in a well-conducted establishment.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURE.—It is nonsense to think soda will freshen anything in cookery that is in any degree approaching decomposition.

FASHION.—Yellow is the favourite tint of the season for all dressy toilettes and for the decoration of plaster flowers.

GEOP.—The snapping turtle is so-called because it snaps ferociously at anything within its reach, and when it bites a thing it is very hard to make it let go.

FAIR MAID OF FAITH.—A daughter at twenty years of age is still legally under the control of her father, and if she lives at home he may in extreme cases be justified in opening her boxes and reading her letters; but there should be no necessity for doing so if the father's authority is worth anything.

SAPPHO.—You will find the quotation, "And discord on the music fell, and darkness on the glory," in Mrs. Browning's very beautiful poem on "Cowper's Grave."

AUGUSTA.—A clergyman of the Church of England may not, unless he divested himself of his clerical character, sit in the House of Commons.

R. A. M.—Never omit regular bathing, for unless the skin is in active condition the cold will close the pores and favour congestion and other diseases.

A. T.—Probate or account duty will be payable, and a solicitor should be consulted to see that what is done is properly done.

AWKWARDLY PLACED.—If the house is on lease the rent must be paid by one tenant or another. If you move the goods the landlord may still sue you.

IRREK.—Rate collectors are appointed by the local authorities; tax collectors generally by the surveyor of taxes for the district.

COMPETITOR.—Write Secretary, Civil Service Commission, Cannon-row, Westminster, stating your desire to compete, and you will get printed schedule with details.

A SOLDIER'S LARS.—If they have the man's regimental number, then by writing to the War Office, Pall Mall, London, they will be told whether he is still in that regiment.

BUTTERFLY.—The Alhambra and the Empire are the largest music-halls in London, and the new music-hall at Manchester is, we believe, the largest in the provinces.

P. RACOT.—The *City of Rome*, 3,144 tons, 560 feet long, 52 feet wide, 37 feet deep; *City of Paris*, 10,500 tons, 574 feet long, 65 feet wide, and 21 feet deep; *City of New York*, same in all respects.

LYDIA.—The periodical to which you allude is not named in any Press directory, nor have we ever heard of it. It is possibly an amateur publication, privately printed.

IN THE MARKET.

'Twas on a dark and stormy night,
The snow was falling soft and light,
When 'mid a crowd both grave and bright,
They met within a market.

Her eyes were shining clear and blue,
Her cheeks were bright with healthful hue;
To see the sights had come those two,
At night within a market.

He looked upon her sunny face,
Her head borne with unconscious grace,
And thought, "How very strange a place
To meet her—in a market."

He told his love one morning bright;
"Dear love, my life you will not bright—
Just think! I've loved you since that night
I met you in the market!"

"To think, before you came," she said,
"A maid forlorn I was to be;
But now"—she glanced up merrily—"I'm not within the market!"

BEE.—If the deceased was an American citizen, his property would be divided according to American law. If he was an English citizen, then according to English law.

GRANBY.—When going from a warm atmosphere into a cooler one keep the mouth closed, so that the air may be warmed on its passage through the nose as it reaches the lungs.

IGNORANT.—The dental vibrator is an apparatus for rendering the extraction of teeth painless. It is simply an application of the well-known electro shock utilised in medicine, and sometimes to be had at country fairs.

PUEZLED ONE.—The complete line, "Conscience availed! Richard's himself again," is from Richard III., act 5, scene III., as altered in Colley Cibber's acting version.

ORANGE BLOSSOM.—The bridesmaids are supposed to be invited by the bride or her father; but who is to pay for their dresses is entirely a matter of private arrangement.

HAPPY DICK.—One of you must reside in the parish during the period of publication of banns. A bedroom hired and occupied there during the time would be sufficient.

LEONORA.—Some astringent mouth wash, such as alum—a teaspoonful to a half-a-pint of water—or tincture of myrrh with a little brandy added, would be of service.

RUDOLPH.—"Blocking" bills in Parliament means that notice of opposition is given, and in that case the bills cannot be taken into consideration after twelve o'clock, which, as a rule, virtually stops their progress.

DISPERADO.—War medals have, we believe, always been issued with a plain edge. We cannot say if the name of the receiver has ever been engraved on the medal before its issue.

BEN.—A will need not be drawn up by a lawyer; but it is much safer to employ one. Two witnesses are needed, who must see the testator sign, and must themselves sign in his presence, and in the presence of each other. If either witness is interested in the will, he loses his interest.

WEATHERFUL.—Good Friday and Christmas Day are usually treated as Sundays. All questions of wages and holidays between master and apprentice should be stated in the indentures.

BORROWFUL JANE.—If a ticket-of-leave man goes abroad, the police will not trouble to bring him back, but they cannot give him authority to go to one of our colonies. He should consult with the authority to whom he reports himself.

CLERK.—There are many devices adopted for the annoyance you mention, one of the most successful being the adoption of a cork penholder shaped like a cigar, which keeps the finger in such a position when writing as to relieve the strain upon the muscles.

G. B. M.—The broad-gauge still exists on the Great Western from Paddington to Exeter, and a few broad-gauge trains run daily. The gauge is, however, mixed, and the broad will be abolished altogether in the near future.

CORALIE.—A "cordwainer" is defined as being, not a twister of cord, but a worker in leather. Our word is the French *cordouannier*, a maker or worker of *cordons*; the former a corruption of *cordovannier*, that is a worker in Cordovan leather.

BEYH.—Oysters are deemed unfit for eating when they begin to spat, which process the native begins in the month of June; but the bivalve is really out of season by the middle of May, when the young are in embryo. Coarse deep-sea oysters do not lose their condition until the latter half of June, and their close season is from then to the beginning of August.

MISCHIEF.—Into an ordinary claret glass or egg cup put an egg, large and down, and you will find that by blowing into the glass sharply the egg can be made to jump out. Place another glass a short distance away from the first one, and a little practice will enable you to blow the egg from one glass into the other. As several failures will precede your success in this experiment, you had better try it with hard-boiled eggs.

F. E. L.—A moustache acts as a sieve for the air. It is something like a French respirator—warming the air before the latter is taken into the lungs. In the same fashion, relatively, the beard acts as a protection for the throat. If you cut off that moustache you will not only catch cold, but since your lungs are weak you may again be taken down by your old malady, pleurisy. Hence a moustache or beard keep a man warm in winter and cool in summer.

BETTY.—To make hard biscuits, take two pounds of flour, two ounces of butter, two eggs, and half-a-teaspoonful of salt. Put the flour, butter, and salt together; then add the eggs and as much milk as will mix it into a stiff dough. Knead well, roll it out quite thin, cut with a round cutter, prick them with a fork, place them on tins, and bake crisp in a moderate oven. This is the only recipe we have of the kind referred to. It will be found satisfactory.

OLIOFATRA.—1. Liberia, the republic on the west coast of Africa, was founded as a colony of free blacks in 1820, by the American Colonisation Society. 2. The whole territory of Liberia has been purchased from time to time from its original owners. 3. The government of the country is on the American model. 4. Liberia was declared an independent State in 1847. It has been recognised by both England and France. 5. The colony was founded with the idea that the liberated slaves in the United States would emigrate there.

G. E. V.—The Rhine takes a plunge of about fifty feet at Schaffhausen. In Sweden the Gotha-Elf falls one hundred feet at Trollhätt; the Hjoemmel Sayka or Hara's lake; the Lulea is two hundred and fifty feet high; and the Rjukan Foss or "Smoking Force" at Mjosvand is no less than eight hundred. The famous Stabbsbach, in the neighbourhood of Lantbrunnen has a descent of nine hundred and eighty feet; but it is stated to be a mere brook, and in summer almost dries up. It takes its name, as is well known, from the dust-like appearance of the spray with which the water chafes in its great descent.

A. HIGHLAND LAD.—There can be no doubt that the onward movement of the Highland regiment under Sir Colin Campbell at a critical moment decided the battle of the Alma. Everywhere else confusion reigned. Regiments were halted, turned back, and even driven back from their attack on the Russian position. But the bold advance of the 42nd, 79th, and 93rd turned what at one time threatened a British defeat into a victory. It was no wonder, therefore, that as the Highland regiments passed to the front the words were heard, "Let the Scotchmen go on! They'll do the work!" You may read all about it in Kinglake's "Crimean War," third volume.

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